

**Theorising the Politics of Survivors:  
Memory, Trauma, and Subjectivity in International Politics**

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D.

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## DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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## STATEMENT 1

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## Summary

This thesis aims to develop a theory of the politics of survivors based on the interrelated issues of memory, trauma, and subjectivity. It defines survivors as those who psychologically suffered from a traumatic event and whose mentalities continue to be affected by traumas. This thesis understands survivors as active participants in political resistance aimed at overthrowing current, authoritarian governments. In order to develop an appropriate theory of the politics of survivors, this thesis examines literature across the disciplines of social science. First, it adopts memory literature to argue that the political crises survivors have endured lead to the development of collective memory among survivors. Second, it incorporates literature of trauma to demonstrate that trauma cannot be conveyed in its entirety in testimony or language. Rather, testimony is used politically in the course of political resistance aimed at undermining the legitimacy of authoritarian governments. Third, the thesis relies on the insights of Slavoj Žižek, whose work highlights the nature of antagonism embedded in the ontology of ultrapolitics. The use of memory by survivors is consistent with Žižek's thesis on the nature of political antagonism; the Real is something which transgresses the social fantasy. Fourth, a theory of the politics of survivors can only succeed if we take into account the formation of survivors' subjectivities. Drawing on an insight of a psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, it shows the relationship between testimony and survivors' social existence through the tension between the *object petit a*, the object of desire filled with the lack, and the Real. The theory also incorporates the notion of *jouissance*, which refers to 'the surplus enjoyment', 'the not-all', and 'the enjoyment outside norm', to argue that recalling a traumatic memory for political resistance reflects survivors' enjoyment, and does not trigger a trauma as some have argued. The thesis tests the utility of this theory through examining the political histories of Southeast Asian countries, notably, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BSPP	Burma Socialist Program Party
CCSP	Cambodian Civil Society Partnership
CLEC	Community Legal Education Centre
COMFREL	Committee for Free and Fair Elections
CPP	Cambodia People's Party
CSD	Centre for Social Development
CVP	Communist Party of Vietnam
ECCC	Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
FUNCINPEC	National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia
KNLF	Khmer National Liberation Front
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
LID	Light Infantry Division
NLD	National League for Democracy
NUFLV	National United Front for Liberation of Vietnam
PAD	People's Alliance for Democracy
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RASU	Yangon Arts and Sciences University
RC	Revolutionary Council
SACs	Security and Administrative Committees
SJMA	San Jose Museum of Art
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
TRT	Thai Rak Thai Party
Viet Tan	Vietnam Reform Party
VOA	Voice of America
VPP	Vietnam Populist Party
UBCV	Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam
UDD	United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship



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**Theorising the Politics of Survivors:  
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# Introduction

## Statement of Research

The aim of this thesis is to develop a theory of the politics of survivors. Survivors are individuals who lived through violence. The thesis focuses on survivors who have actively participated in political opposition after facing violence. Their aim is to overthrow a current political regime they consider illegitimate and replace it with another mode of government. Survivors have participated in diverse forms of action against these regimes, ranging from establishing political organisations either at home or overseas to protests conducted through aesthetic practices. The thesis argues that survivors have been affected by painful memories of the past. The past often leads survivors to use memory to justify their political movements against the government. Such painful memories reveal governments' political responsibility for historical slaughter and mass murder. As such, the painful memory of the survivor is essential to the act of political protest. The memory of the politically active survivor, however, is memory that governments seek to suppress. Memory of the political activist survivor poses a danger to the regime's official memory, hence the reason for its suppression. This painful memory is extraordinary because the subjectivity of survivors is formed through protest against the government. The traumatic events of the past form survivors' subjectivities in the realms of the conscious and the unconscious. The same events also lead to the formation of survivors' desire and *jouissance*.

The account of survivors given in this thesis differs from much of the literature, which tends to depoliticise survivors. There are a number of works that think about survivors in relation to liberty, and in this sense, survivors are overwhelmed with 'the liberating joy'.<sup>1</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Celan, *Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995).

this literature, survivors have the opportunity to choose whether to tell or not to tell the story of violence to others.<sup>2</sup> In this analysis, survivors have no need to commit to political protest. Ulrich Baer, for instance, argues that survivor such as Paul Celan experiences a somatic shock and a loss of a sense of self as a survivor of the Holocaust.<sup>3</sup> Some survivors have continued to suffer from a psychological syndrome, most often known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As a consequence, they only expect medical and psychological aid from others and refrain from political involvement. For instance, Randay Kearns and others focus on the development of medical practice which is vital for survivors of violence.<sup>4</sup> This research seeks to enhance medical treatment, but has no interest in survivors' active involvement in politics. The tendency to depoliticise survivors can also be observed in the research of Ying Liang, Runxia Cao and others, which explores how survivors return to bodily and mental normality after violence.<sup>5</sup> Jan Lanicek simply explored how Jewish survivors of the holocaust in Czechoslovakia were unsuccessful in readjusting to their new life,<sup>6</sup> again, a viewpoint that depoliticises the activity of survivors. These literatures have

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<sup>2</sup> Annette Wieviorka, "On Testimony," in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey Hartman (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Giovanni Leoni, "'The First Blow': Projects for the Camp at Fossoli," in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey Hartman (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Anika Walke, "Silence was Salvation: Child Survivors of Stalin's Terror and World War II in the Soviet Union," *Slavic Review* 75 (1) (2016): 204-206.

<sup>3</sup> Ulrich Baer, *Remnants of Song: Trauma and The Experience of Modernity in Charles Baudelaire and Paul Celan* (California and Stanford: Stanford Univeristy Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Randay Kearns, Brent Myers, and Charles Cairns, "Hospital Bioterrorism Planning and Burn Surge," *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism-Biodefense Strategy Practice and Science* 12 (1) (2014): 20-28. Karen Yoshida and Fady Shanouda, "A culture of silence: modes of objectification and the silencing of disabled bodies," *Disability & Society* 30 (3) (2015): 432-444. Nimisha Patel and Aruna Mahtani, "The Politics of Working with Refugee Survivors of Torture," *The Psychologist* 20 (3) (2007): 164-166. Sarah Van Der Pol and Elizabeth Dale Pehrsson, "Examination of the grieving processes of suicide survivors," *Qualitative Research Journal* 16 (2) (2016): 159-168.

<sup>5</sup> Ying Liang and Runxia Cao, "Employment assistance politics of Chinese government play positive roles! The impact if post-earthquake employment assistance policies on the health-related quality of life of Chinese earthquake populations," *Social Indicators Research* 120 (3) (2015): 835-857. Ecevit Kasapoglu, "Support needs of the survivors of the August 17, 1999 earthquake in Turkey," *Social Indicators Research* 66 (3) (2004): 220-248. Praneed Songwathana, Luppana Kitrungrrote, and Natenapha Khupantawee, "Factors Predicting Quality of Life of Trauma Survivors in the Unrest Areas of the Southernmost Provinces of Thailand," *International Journal of Behavioural Science*. 11 (1) (2016): 67-76.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Lanicek, "What did it mean to be Loyal? Jewish Survivors in Post-War Czechoslovakia in a Comparative Perspective," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 60 (3) (2014): 384-404. See also: Barry and Bonnie Hewlett, *Ebola, Culture and Politics: The Anthropology of an Emerging Disease* (California: Thomas Higher Education, 2008), 98.

treated survivors as disadvantaged individuals who are unable to socially reintegrate. Some scholars examine problems caused by the discourse and state policy that survivors face. Maria Berghs' work examines how government policy on biosocial risks will be effective to survivors from Ebola who have had disabling symptoms.<sup>7</sup> Helga Embracher and others have examined Austrian government policy dealing with victims of the authoritarian regime of the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>8</sup> It remains unclear, however, whether those literatures have treated survivors as politically active individuals.

The survivors that this thesis are interested in are individuals forced to live with a painful memory of the past who have participated in politics. These survivors encountered violence or shockingly unexpected circumstances that unsettled their lives. Despite this, they nonetheless insist on participating in politics in the present. They have solemnly shared their stories by passing them on to the next generation. They are those who have formed political organisations aimed at overthrowing existing governments. They have made a decision to dedicate their life to politics. They anticipate that the living condition of the country as a whole will be improved. Their narratives have been used by judiciaries as testimony of the past and the basis for verdicts. Their testimonies have prevailed in academic works and their arguments have been very influential. These are the survivors that the thesis intends to explore.

Central to the theory of the politics of survivors is the meaning of politics. The term 'politics' is not unproblematic. In order to understand political conflict between survivors

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<sup>7</sup> Maria Berghs, "Neoliberal policy, chronic corruption and disablement: biosecurity, biosocial risks and the creation of 'Ebola survivors'?", *Disability & Society* 31 (2) (2016): 275-279. See also: Bradley Nicholas, "Victims and Survivors of Nazi Human Experiments: Science and Suffering in the Holocaust," *German History* 33 (3) (2015): 508-509.

<sup>8</sup> Helga Embacher and Maria Ecker, "A Nation of Victims – How Austria dealt with the victims of the authoritarian Standestaat and national socialism," in *The Politics of War Trauma: The aftermath of World War II in eleven European countries*, ed. Jolande Withuis et al. (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2010): 15-47. Maria Teresa Brancaccio, "Where Have All the Traumatized People Gone? – World War II and its aftermath in Italy: trauma and oblivion," in *The Politics of War Trauma: The aftermath of World War II in eleven European countries*, ed. Jolande Withuis et al. (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2010): 141-166.

and government, we must clarify what we mean by politics. In clarifying the meaning of politics, we must take into account the following questions: What would be a definition of politics that decisively visualises the conflict between survivors and the government? What would be the political category that shows the state administration as incompleteness? What would be the political category that shows survivor's political activism and reveals a falsity in the official narrative?<sup>9</sup> Slavoj Žižek's categorisation of politics offers answers to these questions.<sup>10</sup> The first politics is *arche-politics*. In this category, community attempts to produce a close homogenous society. The *arche*-political society is a society in agreement with itself. It is a society immunised from conflicts and rebellions, as everyone agrees on the consensus. His second category is *para-politics*. This category demonstrates that politics is about determining administration over social and political issues. Conflicts interlaced with social and political relations are replaced by the managerial skill of the specialist. Implicitly, all political conflicts are managed through public policy formulated by specialists' calculations. A synonym for *para-politics* is 'post-politics'<sup>11</sup>, a term that refers to politics in the post-Cold War where ideological conflict is no longer prominent. Politics is carried out by the specialists, officials, parties and others who are deemed to be equipped with managerial skill. The third category is *meta-politics*. Conflict is an intrinsic feature of politics and politics free from conflict is an illusion. Conflict persists even in political situations where conflict appears to have been eradicated. Conflict can be resolved based on collective will and the rational choices of the subjects or stakeholders. The fourth category is *ultra-politics*, in which political struggle prevails in almost every society. The government seeks to suppress protest, but resistance continues to oppose the governmental order. This explains why politics is inevitably dissensus. Social harmony is a utopia and political

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<sup>9</sup> Jenny Edkins "Remembering Relationality Trauma Time and Politics," In *Memory, Trauma, and World Politics*, ed. Duncan Bell (London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2006): 99-115.

<sup>10</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 190.

<sup>11</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador Books, 2008).

conflict managed by official institutions is only temporary. In this case, social harmony is incapable of concealing trauma; the Real will always disrupt social harmony.

The theory of the politics of survivors in this thesis draws upon the Žižekian category of *ultra-politics*. The main argument I make is that the politics of survivors is not *arche-politics*, according to which everyone is assumed to live in harmony. The politics of survivors as a focus of this thesis is not *para-politics*. The reason for this is that *para-politics* risks emphasising the state construction of official memory. This category of politics does not repudiate the official memory, rather allowing the official memory to continue. The politics of survivors almost goes hand-in-hand with *meta-politics*, the category which assumes that conflict is integral to politics. This assumption about collective will and rational choice in managing conflicts directs the thesis to interrogate survivors' rationality. Instead of interrogating rationality and the collective will, the thesis seeks to understand conflict between survivors and the government. With this justification, the Žižekian category most suitable to the thesis is *ultra-politics*. This issue will become more obvious in the literature review section of the thesis.

## **Research Questions**

With the objective of developing a theory to explain the politics of survivors, and using Žižek's conception of ultrapolitics, the thesis comprises two main research questions. The first question is: "How and in what way have survivors participated in political protests in the present?" Given that survivors cannot avoid the painful memory in respect to the violence occurred in the past, the second question serves as juxtaposition. The second question then, is: "How and in what way do survivors form their subjectivities in relation to these political protests?"

## Literature Review

This third major section of this introduction is a literature review which comprises two sub-sections, addressing: (a) survivors and politics and (b) survivors and the formation of subjectivity.

### *Survivors and Politics*

This sub-section examines literatures that deal with survivors and politics in three distinct categories.

In the first category of literature, it is crucial to note that many literature tend to privilege the policy of the government in granting justice and legal advice to survivors. Janine Natalya Clark views the crucial role of government in granting rights, psychological assistance, and legal supports to survivors.<sup>12</sup> Brady Potts similarly examines the state's role in the search for displaced persons after Hurricane Katrina.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, focusing on the relationship between state and survivor has tended to privilege the role of the state. Indeed, there are literature that suggest that survivors are able to overcome grief and pain only through a state's commitment to justice for war victims.<sup>14</sup> To achieve national reconciliation,

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<sup>12</sup> Janine Natalya Clark, "In from the Margins: Survivors of Wartime Sexual Violence in Croatia and an Early Analysis of the New Law," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 8 (1) (2016): 128-147. See also: Vahe Tachjian, "Gender, nationalism, exclusion: the reintegration process of female survivors of the Armenian genocide," *Nations and Nationalism* 15 (1) (2009): 60-80. Preslava Stoeva, *New Norms and Knowledge in World Politics: Protecting people, intellectual property and the environment* (Oxon and New York, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Brady Potts, "Community Lost: The State, Civil Society, and Displaced Survivors of Hurricane Katrina," *Contemporary Sociology-A Journal of Reviews*, 44 (3) (2015): 339-340. See also: Michael Humphrey and Estela Valverde, "Human Rights Politics and Injustice: Transitional Justice in Argentina and South Africa," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 2 (2008): 83-105. Poulami Roychowdhury, "Victims to Saviors: Governmentality and the Regendering of Citizenship in India," *Gender & Society* 26 (6) (2015): 792-816.

<sup>14</sup> Caterina Di Pasquale, "Massacre, Trial and 'Choral Memory' in Sant'Anna di Stazzema, Italy (1944-2005)," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 6 (3) (2013): 486-501. Goran Basic, "Forgiveness, reconciliation and implacability in narratives of survivors after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Sociologisk Forskning* 50



perpetrators must confess, admit their crimes, and repent.<sup>15</sup> For many survivors, however, national reconciliation does not provide justice unless perpetrators- including the state- provide sufficient reparations and offer sincere apologies. For sufficient reparation to take place, governments and local authorities calculate and design a compensation scheme including social benefits for survivors. For instance, redesigning a legal system can provide survivors with civic rights, psychosocial assistance, and legal support after trauma.<sup>16</sup> The psychological symptoms and suffering of survivors are also considered cause for monetary compensation to be provided.<sup>17</sup> However, Stephanie Wolfe coined the term ‘a reparation memory’<sup>18</sup> to suggest that we cannot achieve true reparation by financial or material means alone. She argues that ‘a reparation memory’ is involved more with the symbolic representation and re-representation of the lost and the somatic absence of the uncured wounded.<sup>19</sup> The term suggests that material and financial supports alone are inadequate, and serious contrition is also required. Wolfe suggests that the gesture of sincere apology will set survivors free from being the victims of an injustice. But some scholars warn that apology- including the process of truth-telling may sustain dominant power relations rather than dismantling them.<sup>20</sup>

In world politics, we can see that survivors have contributed to national reconciliation. Examples are wide-ranging. After the massacre of Sant’ Anna di Stazzema in

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(1) (2013): 51-68. Mneesha Gellman, “Remembering violence: the role of apology and dialogue in Turkey’s democratizing process,” *Democratization* 20 (4) (2013): 771-794. Stephanie Wolfe, *The Politics of Reparations and Apologies* (New York: Springer, 2014)

<sup>15</sup> Basic, “Forgiveness, reconciliation and implacability,” 51. Di Pasquale, “Massacre, Trial and ‘Choral Memory,” 486.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, “In from the Margins,” 1.

<sup>17</sup> Stoeva, *New Norms and Knowledge in World Politics*, 8.

<sup>18</sup> Wolfe, *The Politics of Reparations and Apologies*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Wolfe, *The Politics of Reparations and Apologies*, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Briggittine French, “Technologies of Telling: Discourse, Transparency, and Erasure in Guatemalan Truth Commission Testimony,” *Journal of Human Rights* 8 (1) (2009): 92-109. Lisa Laplante and Kimberly Theidon, “Truth with consequences: Justice and reparations in post-truth commission Peru,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 29 (1) (2007): 228-250.

Italy, for example, survivors and relatives were able to achieve reconciliation.<sup>21</sup> In India, survivors of rapes have attempted to reclaim their citizenship by urging a reconstitution of social position for women with support from the current government.<sup>22</sup> In Turkey, survivors and descendants have used of memory in dialogue with the democratising Turkish state, not only to achieve national reconciliation, but also obviously to effect social and political transformation.<sup>23</sup> In Guatemala and South Africa, survivors have provided testimonies in the truth-telling process in pursuit of peaceful national reconciliation.<sup>24</sup> Besides being prominent parts of the truth-telling process (as evident in South Africa), female survivors in Armenia took part in rebuilding the country after World War I.<sup>25</sup> Although many literature show that survivors are political participants, seeking national reconciliation, this does not guarantee satisfactory political outcomes in every case. There are shortcomings and limitations that must also be taken into consideration. In Rwanda, it is found that ‘a revenge fantasy’ and ‘retraumatisation’ have continued in survivors’ mentalities and such sentiments are an obstacle to reconciliation.<sup>26</sup> Besides that, in their study of Peru, Lisa Laplante and Kimberly Theidon caution that the act of telling the truth to the official agency may hinder the recovery process and obstruct the survivor’s struggle over reparations due to retaliation outside the official commission.<sup>27</sup> In short, it must be noted that while the act of truth-telling after conflict may appear to give voices to survivors, it can lead to the continuation of survivors as disempowered victims in unintended ways.

In the second category of literature, survivors are viewed as those who have passed their memories to the following generation. For example, Elizabeth Jelin and Pamela Ballinger show how survivors have borne witness to trauma and how they have transmitted

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<sup>21</sup> Pasquale, “Massacre, Trial and ‘Choral Memory,’” 486.

<sup>22</sup> Roychowdhury, “Victims to Saviors,” 792.

<sup>23</sup> Gelman, “Remembering violence,” 771-794.

<sup>24</sup> French, “Technologies of Telling,” 92.

<sup>25</sup> Tachjian, “Gender, nationalism, exclusion,” 60.

<sup>26</sup> Kaplan, “Child Survivors of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and Trauma-Related Affect,” 92.

<sup>27</sup> Laplante and Theidon, “Truth with consequences,” 228-250.

trauma to younger generations.<sup>28</sup> There is a suggestion that survivors use poetry and writing to form a collective memory, while Garry Weissman discovers that children of the Holocaust were forced to be reluctant witnesses to trauma.<sup>29</sup> Trauma is one of the factors that forms family biography and the identity of family members,<sup>30</sup> and testimony of trauma reflects the power relations between perpetrators and victims.<sup>31</sup> Here, the hypothesis is that memory is communicative and is communicated both linguistically and non-linguistically. In the linguistic dimension, memories of war and violence are illuminated in the narratives of survivors. Narrative reveals an endeavour to construct the identity of survivors including family histories of survivors. In other words, some literature focus on how narrative reflects survivors' memories, which in turn reflects their family histories, backgrounds, and identities 'beyond the self'.<sup>32</sup> The objective, as shown by T.G. Ashplant and others, is to express and

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<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003). See also: Lisa Taylor, Umwali Sollange, and Marie-Jolie Rwigema, "The Ethics of Learning from Rwanda Survivor Communities: Critical Reflexivity and the Politics of Knowledge Production in Genocide Education," in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, ed. Steven High (Vancouver and Toronto Press: UBC Press, 2015). Jason Williamson, "A Survivor's Perspective on Memory and Memorial Culture: Recollections on the 20th Anniversary of the Oklahoma City Bombing," *SOCIAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY* 97 (1) (2016): 101-104.

<sup>29</sup> Markus Nesselrodt, "'I bled like you, brother, although I was a thousand miles away': postwar Yiddish sources on the experiences of Polish Jews in Soviet exile during World War II," *East European Jewish Affairs* 46 (1) (2016): 47-67. Gary Weissman, "Reluctant Witnesses: Survivors, Their Children, and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness," *Journal of American History* 102 (3) (2015): 928-929.

<sup>30</sup> Mitchie Takeuchi and Miyako Taguchi, "Mitchie Takeuchi and Miyako Taguchi: Second-generation survivors of the atomic bomb," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 71 (4) (2015). Donna Nagata, Jackie Kim, and Teresa Nguyen, "Processing Cultural Trauma: Intergenerational Effects of the Japanese American Incarceration," *Journal of Social Issues* 71 (2) (2015): 356-370. Anika Walke, "Memories of an Unfulfilled Promise: Internationalism and Patriotism in Post-Soviet Oral Histories of Jewish Survivors of the Nazi Genocide," *Oral History Review* 40 (2) (2013): 271-298.

<sup>31</sup> Arlene Stein, "Trauma and Origins: Post-Holocaust Genealogists and the Work of Memory," *Qualitative Sociology* 32 (3) (2009): 293-309. PG Min, "Korean 'comfort women' – The intersection of colonial power, gender, and class," *Gender & Society* 17 (6) (2003): 938-957. Judith Harman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdorff, and Graham Dawson, *Trauma: Life Stories of Survivors* (London and New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 2004), 6.

<sup>32</sup> Jefferson Singer and Martin Conway, "The varieties of remembered experience: Moving memory beyond the bounded self," *Memory Studies* 7 (3) (2014): 385-392. Jason Williamson, "A Survivor's Perspective on Memory and Memorial Culture: Recollection on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Oklahoma City Bombing," in *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, ed. Elizabeth Jelin, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). Ronit Lentin, "Memories for the Future," *International Sociology* 24 (2) (2009): 173-184. Thomas DeGloma, "The social logic of 'false memories': Symbolic awakenings and symbolic worlds in survivor and retractor narratives," *Symbolic Interaction* 30 (4) (2007): 543-565.

arrange commemoration in order to achieve public recognition.<sup>33</sup> Judith Harman argues that to absorb survivors' stories and their identities requires a large degree of sympathy from listeners, and "survivors' stories about the experience of abuse and brutality requires a reciprocal willingness on the part of the others to listen."<sup>34</sup> The aim in telling a distressed narrative varies. Some survivors may intend simply to pass memory to the next generation in order to form a coherent family biography.<sup>35</sup> However, there are other survivors whose narratives claim to be truth-telling and to disclose the social and power structures that had caused violence.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, in the non-linguistic sphere, there exists a spectacle through which the distressing memory of the survivor is transmitted to individuals walking past.<sup>37</sup> For instance, the Memorial and Museum at Ground Zero is an archival space that stores objects belonging to 9/11 survivors. The aim of the museum is to communicate memory non-linguistically, and as Marita Sturken observed, it seeks to preserve, create, and re-create the meaning of the memory of 9/11.<sup>38</sup>

These scenarios show that survivors in different parts of the world continue to carry and communicate memories of violence linguistically and non-linguistically. Examples are diverse. In Latin America, survivors have attempted to communicate memory to the next generation in order to ensure that they remember political violence.<sup>39</sup> In Rwanda, survivors have sought to build relationships of reciprocity and meaningful collaboration through

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<sup>33</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, *The Politics of war memory and commemoration: contexts, structures, and dynamics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 3-4. Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6. Nancy Whittier, *The Politics of Child Sexual Abuse: Emotion, Social Movements, and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>34</sup> Harman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Takeuchi, "Mitchie Takeuchi and Miyako Taguchi."

<sup>36</sup> Min, "Korean "comfort women"," 938-957.

<sup>37</sup> Marita Sturken, "The objects that lived: The 9/11 Museum and material transformation," *Memory Studies* 9 (1) (2016): 13-26. See also: Sunday Moulton, "How to Remember; The Interplay of Memory and Identity Formation in Post-Disaster Communities," *Human Organization* 74 (4) (2015): 319-328. James Lutz, "Until the Fires Stopped Burning: 9/11 and New York City in the Words and Experiences of Survivors and Witnesses," *European Legacy-Toward New Paradigms* 18 (6) (2013): 788-789.

<sup>38</sup> Sturken, "The objects that lived," 13-26. Lutz, "Until the Fires Stopped Burning."

<sup>39</sup> Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*.

teaching and studying the 1994 genocide.<sup>40</sup> In the former Soviet Union, survivors used poetry and writing to communicate the story among exiles. They established the desire for dialogue with other survivors living in the resettled country.<sup>41</sup> In Japan, second generation survivors tell the story of the atomic bomb (*Hibakusha*) with a sense of responsibility for sharing family stories about nuclear weapons.<sup>42</sup> In South Korea, female survivors tell the truth of the sexual abuse they suffered and reveal that their victimhood were related to the matrix of colonial power, gender hierarchy, and class.<sup>43</sup> In Israel, survivors' stories are used to make claims over contested territory for the construction of a nation.<sup>44</sup> The aim of survivors in telling the story of the past underpins their social interactions and the construction of identity for themselves and for the nation. In addition, identity construction can take place non-linguistically, as Sunday Moulton has argued in his work exploring the way that post-disaster identities can be expressed through spaces, memorials, and monuments.<sup>45</sup> In addition to this, some literature even show that survivors have carried and communicated memories forward through the use of digital technology.<sup>46</sup> The aim is to carry memory beyond the bounded self and to transmit the collective memory of the past to wider audiences at the international level.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the second category of literature displays how survivors actively produce and reproduce memory linguistically and non-linguistically. Those literature are not responsive enough, however, to questions of survivors' political activism aiming at political and social transformation.

In the third category of literature, many literature treat survivors in a different way to the two previous categories by both implying and empowering survivors as political

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<sup>40</sup> Taylor, "The Ethics of Learning from Rwanda Survivor Communities."

<sup>41</sup> Nesselrodt, "I bled like you, brother, although I was a thousand miles away".

<sup>42</sup> Takeuchi, "Mitchie Takeuchi and Miyako Taguchi." Nagata, "Processing Cultural Trauma."

<sup>43</sup> Min, "Korean "comfort women", 938-957.

<sup>44</sup> Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Moulton, "How to Remember."

<sup>46</sup> Singer, "The varieties of remembered experience."

<sup>47</sup> Lentin, "Memories for the Future." DeGloria, "The social logic of "false memories".

activists.<sup>48</sup> Survivors are understood neither as victims nor as passive individuals. Ronni Alexander shows, for instance, that survivors can express memory as part of a peaceful campaign to let others understand the experience of war.<sup>49</sup> Mahmood Mamdani speaks about survivors and activists in relation to the question of justice, and his way of thinking converges with Anna Jarstad's view that emotion drives survivors to pursue justice.<sup>50</sup> Any perspective that takes survivors as agents of social and political change requires recognition of survivors' social and political empowerment.<sup>51</sup> Some writers in this category have invented significant philosophical terms, which help us to consider the political activism of survivors in terms of philosophy and social theory. Several terms such as a 'trauma time', a 'concentrationary memory', and an 'irrevocable time' offer useful theoretical lenses. They come out to suggest that survivors are individuals whose lives continue to be dominated by trauma. The theories also suggest that survivors are agents of political change. 'Trauma time', the term invented by Jenny Edkins to indicate a negligence of a trauma, is constituted outside of the paradigm of

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<sup>48</sup> Rachel Ibreck, "The Politics of Mourning: Survivor Contributions to Memorials in Post-genocide Rwanda," *Memory Studies* 3 (4) (2010): 330-331. Berber Bevernage, *History, Memory, and State-Sponsored Violence* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012). Huma Saeed, "Victims and Victimhood: Individuals of Inaction or Active Agents of Change? Reflections on Fieldwork in Afghanistan," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 10 (1) (2016): 168-178. Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> Ronni Alexander, "Remembering Hiroshima Bio-Politics, Popoki and Sensual Expressions of War," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14 (2) (2012): 202-222. See also: Norman Jean Profitt, *Women Survivors, Psychological Trauma, and the Politics of Resistance* (New York: The Haworth Press, 2000). Susan Lindee, *Suffering Made Real: American Science and the Survivors at Hiroshima* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 9. Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Resistance and Cultural Memories* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, "Beyond Nuremberg: The Historical Significance of the Post-apartheid Transition in South Africa," *Politics & Society* 43 (1) (2015): 61-88. See also: Anna Jarstad and Kristine Høglund, "Local Violence and politics in Kwazulu-Natal: perceptions of agency in a post-conflict society," *Third World Quarterly* (2015): 967-984. Elissa Helms, "Rejecting Angelina: Bosnian War Rape Survivors and the Ambiguities of Sex in War," *Slavic Review* 73 (3) (2014), 612. Sanjiv Pandita, "Letter from China. Environment and Labor Change in China: Victims Become the Agents of Change," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 85 (2014): 201-205.

<sup>51</sup> Saeed, "Victims and Victimhood." Lessa, "Justice beyond Borders." Mahmood Mamdani, "Beyond Nuremberg." Profitt, *Women Survivors, Psychological Trauma, and the Politics of Resistance*. Whittier, *The Politics of Child Sexual Abuse*. Marilyn Nissim-Sabat, *Neither Victim nor Survivor: Thinking toward a new humanity* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009). Francesca Lessa, "Justice beyond Borders: The Operation Condor Trial and Accountability for Transnational Crimes in South America," *International Journal of Transnational Justice* 9 (3) (2015): 494-506. David Grua, "'In Memory of the Chief Big Foot Massacre': The Wounded Knee Survivors and the Politics of Memory," *Western Historical Quarterly* 46 (1) (2015): 31-51.

the state, and produces a rupture in the existing social framework.<sup>52</sup> If the trauma of those external to the state returns, the existing social framework that negates trauma in the first place will dissipate. Griselda Pollock invents the term ‘concentrationary memory’ to describe a memory that shows the permanent presence of the past haunting the present. Concentrationary memory is assumed to be the relation between the politics of total domination that continues to destroy human life and self-conscious aesthetic practices. The latter identified and resisted that persistent threat.<sup>53</sup> As a consequence, the presence of the haunting past is a sign to be consciously and politically resisted through aesthetic practices.<sup>54</sup> Berber Bevernage’s term ‘irrevocable time’, partially influenced by the French philosopher, Vladimir Jankélévitch, serves to demonstrate this point. By representing the past as tough, insistent, and stubborn, survivors show the past to be persistent in the present.<sup>55</sup> In his work, Bevernage raises the example of the Khulumani Support Group, an activist group constituted of survivors of brutalities in South Africa. While their opponents have argued that the past is irreversible, in order to secure impunity for offenders, Khulumani’s political activism is based on a notion of irrevocable time. They tend to view the past as having a haunting effect. The aim of the Group is to hinder offenders’ attempts to bury the past.<sup>56</sup>

These scenarios show that following violence, survivors have become political activists. Examples in world politics are diverse. In South America, survivors of ‘Operation Condor’ participated in processes of transitional justice.<sup>57</sup> In South Dakota, U.S.A., survivors engaged in memorialisation by erecting a monument ‘In Memory of the Chief Big Foot Massacre’ of 1890. The monument shows the memorial practices of survivors. It reveals

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<sup>52</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and The Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Jenny Edkins “Remembering Relationality Trauma Time and Politics.” Jenny Edkins “Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11,” *International Relations*, August 16 (2) (2002): 243-256.

<sup>53</sup> Pollock, *Concentrationary Memories*, xvi.

<sup>54</sup> Pollock, *Concentrationary Memories*, xvii.

<sup>55</sup> Berber Bevernage, *History, Memory, and State-Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2012), 4.

<sup>56</sup> Bevernage, *History, Memory, and State-Sponsored Violence*, 65.

<sup>57</sup> Lessa, “Justice beyond Borders.”

survivors' protests against official memory- the narrative accepted by the government and society – of the 'Battle of Wounded Knee'.<sup>58</sup> In Bosnia, a group of Bosnian rape survivors put a pressure on the local government. They demanded the government to withdraw a decision on Angelina Jolie's on-location filming permit as her film, 'In the Land of Blood and Honey', tells the story of love between a Bosnian Muslim woman, a survivor, and her Serb rapist. The plot of the film has faced sentimental resistance from survivors rape during the war.<sup>59</sup> In China, one of the survivors of the Zhili Factory Fire that killed more than 88 workers in January 2013 has become an active organiser rather than a passive victim, and an agent for social and environmental change.<sup>60</sup> In Japan, survivors of the atomic bombs published testimonies revealing their anti-war sentiments in the pursuit of peace.<sup>61</sup> There is no guarantee that survivors turning to political activism will achieve a social transformation. Yet it can be said that survivors as political activists reveal in those scenarios concepts such as a 'trauma time', a 'concentrationary memory', and an 'irrevocable time'.

In conclusion, the main objective of this sub-section has been to review the literature about survivors and their political roles. It shows in the first category of literature that there are survivors whose political objectives are to assimilate with the state's policy of national reconciliation without creating political disruption. The second category of literature argues that survivors are the carriers of the memory of the past. Throughout world politics, memory has been formed, transmitted and expressed in both linguistic and non-linguistic modes. In contrast, the third category of literature highlights survivors as political activists, the literature most in keeping with the hypothesis of this thesis. In other words, the thesis's main research question about the role of survivors in political activism corresponds with this third literature. Problematically, however, all literature outlined in this section understate the issue of

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<sup>58</sup> Grua, "In Memory of the Chief Big Foot Massacre".

<sup>59</sup> Helms, "Rejecting Angelina."

<sup>60</sup> Pandita, "Letter from China. Environment and Labor Change in China."

<sup>61</sup> Lindee, "Suffering Made Real."



subjectivity, another crucial aspect of this thesis's inquiry. It is for this reason that literature dealing with subjectivity formation- particularly among survivors- will be the subject of the next section

### ***Survivors and the Formation of Subjectivity***

This sub-section reviews literature that deal with survivors' subjectivity formation. Some literature show survivors competing with each other to tell the story and make it register within the social order.<sup>62</sup> But within many literature, survivors are identified or subjectivised as 'not being the real witness to trauma',<sup>63</sup> 'portended to be living as the 'submortals as the bare life'',<sup>64</sup> 'practising a self-victimisation with their bodies in the absence of the death'<sup>65</sup>, and 'being forced to live in guilty and anger'.<sup>66</sup> The aim of this sub-section is to explore survivors and the formation of subjectivity in relations to those four phases.

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<sup>62</sup> Goran Basic, "Competition for Victimhood in Stories of Survivors from the Bosnian War," *Tidsskrift For Samfunnsforskning* 55 (2) (2014): 203-228. Petra Fiero, "Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities," *German Studies Review* 36 (3) (2013): 731-732.

<sup>63</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*. (London: Abacus Books, 1989). Siegrun Wildner, "Hybrid Testimony and Moral Indictment; A Survivor's Poetic Response to the Mauthausen Nazi Concentration Camp Experience," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 29 (3) (2015): 460-477. Roy Schwartzman, "Sutured Identities in Jewish Holocaust Survivor Testimonies," *Journal of Social Issues* 71 (2) (2015): 279-293.

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence Langer, "Remembering Survival," in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey Hartman (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>65</sup> Corie Hammers, "Corporeality, Sadomasochism, and Sexual Trauma," *Body & Society* 20 (2) (2014): 68-90. Janet Jacobs, "Sites of Terror and the Role of Memory in Shaping Identity Among First Generation Descendants of the Holocaust," *Qualitative Sociology* 37 (1) (2014): 27-42. Tim Cole, "Crematoria, Barracks, Gateway Survivors' Return Visits to the Memory Landscape of Auschwitz," *History & Memory* 25 (2) (2013): 102-131. Suzanne Kaplan, "Child Survivors of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and Trauma-Related Affect," *Journal of Social Issues* 69 (1) (2013): 92-110. Theo Hollander and Bani Gill, "Every Day the War Continues in My Body: Examining the Marked Body in Postconflict Northern Uganda," *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 8 (2) (2014): 217-234.

<sup>66</sup> Katherine Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration: Memorials to Struggle in Latin America and Spain*. (New York: Routledge, 2012). Gwyn McClelland, "Guilt, Persecution, and Resurrection in Nagasaki; Atomic Memories and the Urakami Catholic Community," *Social Science Japan Journal* 18 (2) (2015): 233-240.

First, Primo Levi suggests considering survivors as “not the real witnesses to trauma”.<sup>67</sup> The real witnesses to trauma are those whose cruel destiny forced them to stare at the Gorgon. ‘The drowned’ are not survivors while ‘the saved’ are. ‘The drowned’ “did not return to tell the tale” while the ‘saved’, have the authority to speak about violence and atrocities. Because they are ‘the saved’, one of the subjectivities of survivors is that they are not the real witnesses to a trauma in contrast to ‘the drowned’, who are. Second, survivors are noted by Lawrence Langer as men or women who unfortunately have entered into another realm of imprisonment. Survivors struggle to live with their deprivation and to tolerate their losses, and being forced to live through deprivation and loss is another form of imprisonment. After liberation, survivors have enjoyed less freedom in life because they have endured being deprived of “something that [already] died in and through them”<sup>68</sup>. Survivors are not mortal. They are ‘submortals’, the term that designates that liberation is implicated with a new form of imprisonment. Liberation is not meant to be an immediate enjoyment. Liberation is rather synonymous with the recognition of what is deprived, hence the subjectivity of the survivor is submortal. The submortal is a cruel fate of life as survivors are forced to live in solitude with their enjoyment suspended. Thus, survival is life forced to live as ‘submortals’ (the Agambenian *homo sacer*) and not as liberated mortals.

Third, Goran Basic and Petra Fiero show that survivors are those who compete with others to be the most painful victims.<sup>69</sup> Both scholars seem to share the view that survivors develop a discursive pattern to bridge their experiences and society. The discursive construction of survivorhood is driven by survivors’ self-symbolisation as victims worthy of sympathy. To accomplish this self-symbolisation, survivors love letting others see them as victims. It will be intolerant for them if others view them as perpetrators. Fourth, there are

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<sup>67</sup> Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 83-84.

<sup>68</sup> Langer, “Remembering Survival,” 70.

<sup>69</sup> Basic, “Competition for Victimhood,” 203. Fiero, “Holocaust Survivors,” 731.

literature that suggest that survivors are constantly dominated by guilt and anger.<sup>70</sup> The term ‘survivor guilt’ is coined to represent survivors’ deep feelings attached to the incident. Guilt is felt by survivors, who would like to face death alongside their comrades. They feel guilty for surviving when their dead comrades did not. In addition, a refusal to let the past go is found among survivors who tend to restore trauma in the present. In Rwanda, for instance, child survivors continue to maintain memories of what they were forced to endure. It also shows that child survivors adopted ‘a retraumatisation’ and ‘a revenge fantasy’ by constituting them as their unchanged subjectivity.<sup>71</sup> Because survivors can disrupt inter-state negotiation through their attachment to the events of the past, this sentiment can subvert processes of national reconciliation.

In conclusion, the four phases are useful to understand survivors’ subjectivity. But they lack consideration on subjectivity in relation to political activism. The thesis provides a new orientation to this literature by looking at the relationship between survivors’ subjectivities and political activism. In the present, survivors’ subjectivities are formed in conflict with the government, and the painful memory of the past. Painful memories of the past remain constant and have shaped the subjectivities of survivors. This point corresponds with the second research question. The second question seeks to interrogate the relationship between memory, subjectivity, and the political activism of survivors. As a result, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is a useful resource if we expect to respond to this second research question. Concepts derived from Lacanian psychoanalysis illuminate the subjectivity of survivors in their struggles against the government. Concepts articulated by Lacan such as conscious, unconscious, *the object petit a*, and *jouissance* can shed light on survivors’ subjectivity. The Lacanian approach points out that survivors participate in political activism and are not simply apolitical. In the course of this thesis, I examine only survivors who have

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<sup>70</sup> Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration*. McClelland, “Guilt, Persecution, and Resurrection in Nagasaki.”

<sup>71</sup> Kaplan, “Child Survivors of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide and Trauma-Related Affect,” 93.

commitments to political activism and protest. I believe, for instance, that within a Lacanian psychoanalytic outlook, survivors cannot be subjectivised as ‘not the real witness’ or as ‘the submortal’. I also insist that within a Lacanian outlook, survivors cannot simply be viewed as competing for victimhood within the symbolic order. In addition, it is naïve to treat survivors as depoliticised individuals overwhelmed by guilty and fear from the past. As a consequence, it is necessary to move beyond Levi’s and Langer’s reflections on survivors, as well as other literatures which understate or ignore the political activism of survivors. This argument about subjectivity of survivor will be elaborated in the next section that draws on Lacan’s concept of subjectivity in relation to political philosophy.

### **Lacan, Survivor, Subjectivity, and Political Philosophy**

In this section, I will take into account Lacan’s subjectivity to engage with insights of political philosophy and survivor. I articulate all points in threefold.

The first insight shows the interrelation among survivor, subjectivity, bare life, and *jouissance*. Deciding to engage in a course of political resistance, it is improper to signify subjectivity of survivor as bare life but more properly as *jouissance*. To define, bare life is life that can be killed and not yet mournful.<sup>72</sup> In a time of violence, bare life is probably a condition of life that describes the subjects facing violence. Many subjects are at risk to be killed without mourning and remembrance paying over their dead. Following power relation between state and the subjects who are unable to turn around this relationship is a situation in which bare life emerges. Bare life comes after the situation of violence surrounding the subjects and they are incapable of renegotiating such power relationship. In some occasions, subjects must die because state labelling them as enemies who emerge from within the state

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<sup>72</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 181.

itself. Thus, bare life is a life dying without grief, lamentation, and compensation giving to them.

However, I argue that bare life is the politicised life that has a limitation to explain survivors participating in political resistance to the state. During violence, individuals seeking survival are as vulnerable to be killed as bare life but this is not a specific kind of subjectivity after the incident was over. Aiming to resist a pre-given social and political structure of being life that can be destroyed without mourning, survivors in large part reverse this power relation by embarking on a task of opposing the state. It is life daring to face death – albeit hopeless to make a reversal to a political order – that self-transforming from being bare life to a politicised life daring to embrace death while living. Psychoanalysis delineates such life daring to face death as life of the subjects entrenched with death drive. Life that associated with death drive is life which is unable to be determined and signified by social norm and convention. If such life has an enjoyment, it will be a particular kind of enjoyment unbounded to social norm and convention; it will be life entrenched with the will of self-destruction. I argue that this specific figure of livelihood engaged politically against the government with a will of self-destruction is what Lacanian articulates as *jouissance*. As the term *jouissance* pertains to a pain-in-pleasure<sup>73</sup>, this suggests that subjectivity of survivor at a moment of political resistance against the state should be well described as those embracing *jouissance* as a pain in pleasure and equally as death drive as a will to face death while living rather than being understood as bare life.

The second insight appoints the interrelation among survivor, subjectivity, desire, state, and master-signifier. By arguing that survivors have joined political movement aiming at democratising country, their political activities do transgress the state political permission.

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<sup>73</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII*, trans. Dennis Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 263.

In a Lacanian fashion, political permission is a state functioning as the Other aiming at structuring desire to the subject, yet survivors eventually transgressing such structure of the desire of the Other. Thus, their political participation shapes not only subjectivity in the moment of resistance, but also shows that such movement of political action beyond the state permission is impossible for the state acting as a master-signifier to structuring desire over the subjects. Following violence and the Hobbesian state of nature, the sovereign body emerges alongside a demand over the centralised entity to protect and guarantee collective security for the subjects. Exercising political power through a constitution which is harnessed as a major legal aspect, the state prescribes and grants permission to the subjects, informing them what they should contribute to state and what they must not do against state. This authority of the state forms a structure of desire over the subjects. For the state to survive, not relapsed to a state of nature, the relation between state and the subjects must be kept stabilised. In a Lacanian fashion, this means that this relation between the state (as the Other as being enacted in a position of a master) and the subjects (subordinating to the Other in compensation for security and prosperity) must be kept in harmonious condition for the sustainability and solid existence of the modern state. Complying with the desire of the Other is a condition the subjects have been conceding and consenting upon in favour of a continuity of modern state; the desire of the sovereign body and the subjects are identical to each other.

However, such relation between state and subjects disintegrated as a result of state's renewal of its relation to the subjects in time of violence and emergency. Based on the lone authority of exercising violence, state under emergency can make a decision to spare some life while killing others. This new relationship leads to a collapse of the harmonious relation between state and subjects, which means that the desire of the Other<sup>74</sup> in which the subjects have been consenting upon is no longer stabilised. Under the time of violence, state breaks

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<sup>74</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 262.

this harmonious relation. It is under this new direction between the desire of the Other and the subject in which trauma is a direct outcome of this relation. Trauma is an outcome of a changing condition in the desire of the Other, at least from the harmonious relation to the state of emergency. Trauma is an effect following the condition the state can decide which life that they want to preserve and which life they want to destroy. Consequently, it is hard for the subjects to comply with the desire of the Other as long as the state is likely to make a decision to kill (some of) them. In other words, the desire of the sovereign body under the state of emergency – a possible cause for trauma – is far from satisfying the subjects. As long as such subjectivity that is not bound to the state is outside the state permission, this suggests that such subjectivity has no master-signifier to provide a meaning to it.

After the state of emergency was over or after the end of political conflict, the surviving persons are those who cannot leave the past behind. They are those who want to seek justice by asking the state to be responsible for a crime committed during the war, state of emergency, violence, etc. They are those who have been engaging in a mission of political resistance outside state permission. At this point, I argue in Lacanian fashion that survivors committed to political resistance have formed subjectivity based on their refusal to cooperating with the desire of the Other. Such subjectivity transgressing the norm and convention the state anticipates their subjects to coordinate points out to what Lacan calls a subject lacking of the signifier to provide a meaning to it. In other words, subjectivity of survivor unbounded to the state permission shows a lack of master-signifier capable of elucidating it. Subjectivity of survivor under circumstance of political resistance taking place outside of state permission delineates Lacan's suggestion that: "there is no master-signifier"<sup>75</sup>. There are two major points following from this. First, such subjectivity of the survivor in respect to political resistance is the subject transforming power relation between

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<sup>75</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 110.

the desire of the Other and the subject. This indicates an erosion of a foundation of modern state. Second, such subjectivity of survivor is not a bare life. As their movement and action overburdened with the will to face death are not in conjoint with the state normalisation, such subjectivity of survivor has no master-signifier in which the state can give a meaning to it.

The third insight provides a critical viewpoint by drawing on the aspects of truth, subjectivity, and *the object petit a*. The highlight is that state's formation of truth about violence leads to the formative account of Ideological-Trauma and survivors intransigent to it. It emphasises that both Ideological-Trauma and the survivor's resistance to it is far from producing a truth-effect about the incident. Ideological-Trauma corresponds to the state's objective in structuring desire over the subject while survivor's opposition to it simply shows a lack inherent in the structure. Survivor's opposition to Ideological-Trauma by way of giving their own testimonies on violence does not count as the truth of the incident. It rather serves as *the object petit a*, which in turn shows that the structure of desire given by the state is a lack.<sup>76</sup> This leads us to perceive the Real-trauma emanated from survivors; however, the Real-trauma does not stand for the wholeness truth of the incident either.

Following the end of violence, state plays a key role in forming memory of the incident. Such formation of collective memory over the incident is to let the subjects to remember the incident in a way that state demands. I term such a state production of memory of violence imposing to the subjects as Ideological-Trauma, adjacent to the desire of the Other described earlier. However, such state-sponsored memory simply stands as a substitution of the truth about violence. This makes discernible to what Lacan terms as *object petit a*, or the object cause of desire standing as a substitution to truth, yet the subjects are in need of it otherwise they have nothing to take for granted as the meaning in life. The *object*

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<sup>76</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 72.



*petit a* is produced out of the inaccessibility to truth, however, the subjects need it instead of truth itself. Applying to the thesis, Ideological-Trauma is not the truth of the incident. It is simply *the object petit a*, or, the social meaning sponsored by state in order to let the society to have some meaning as a ground for knowledge, albeit incomplete, or else the society lacks a foundation of knowledge. Modern state cannot sustain itself without such fictionalisation, the *object petit a* compelling the subjects to taking this mystical character of the state fictionalisation for granted as truth. Perhaps the imagined community is possible through this imaginary collective fiction that the subjects put their faith upon it, to secure it as if it is truth itself. In relation to the truth-effect, Ideological-Trauma is thus an *object petit a* or a lack inherent to the object of desire insofar as it simply acts as a surrogating truth.

Survivor, a traumatised person opposing the state-sponsored memory, produces differential accounts of memory to Ideological-Trauma. Their narratives and testimonies show not the truth of the incident, and not the hidden story the government refuses to tell. Their testimonies reflect their political objective in creating counterproductive memory to the Ideological-Trauma. Survivors' memory and testimony are the Real-Trauma, implying an antagonism in the interpretation of the past. However, the emphasis is that the Real-trauma does not mean literally the truth of the incident. The Real-trauma is a memory that anti-government survivors bring into fore in order to challenge the legitimacy of the state. At this point, the Real-trauma is not the truth. In the same way as Ideological-Trauma, the Real-Trauma is the *object petit a*. Testimony of survivor is the object cause of desire survivors produce as a substitution for the inaccessibility to truth as a means to gain supports from others, e.g. the mass, the sympathisers, the activists, etc. What lurks behind this is nothing but the usage of their memories in order to challenge the government they considered illegitimate to rule the country and to attract people who devote themselves for political activism. Consequently, it can be concluded in terms of the conflict over politics of memory that

survivors and the state have been engaging in establishing truth of the incident, but there is no such thing as the truth as such. Survivors and the state are taking on the same political thinking; using and constituting memory in favour of their ideologies. That is to say, they have been undertaking a task in fictionalising the past, trying to summon others to trust that their fictions are truth itself. Sadly, those constructed artificial memories served as *the object petit a*, something that is desirable by some but undesirable by others who well consider on its lack and incompleteness. Politics is the ontology of the lack. It is a deception in harmony and characterised as the completion incomplete. Certainly, the politics of survivors argued in this thesis has no exception.

## Research Methodology

This section details the case studies and the research methodologies the thesis will use to investigate them. The so-called ‘politics of survivors’ will be examined through four political scenarios in Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam; Cambodia; Myanmar; and Thailand. Survivors of the Vietnam War and of the Khmer Rouge have been chosen because of the historic large scale of massacre, as shown in many literature.<sup>77</sup> Survivors from Myanmar have been chosen because of their dynamics in driving the country’s political

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<sup>77</sup> Francisco Ferrandiz, *Necropolitics: mass graves and exhumations in the age of human rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). Joseph Ingle, *Slouching Toward Tyranny Mass Incarceration, Death Sentences and Racism* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2015). Brendan Howe, *Post-Conflict Development in East Asia* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2014). John Ciociari, *Hybrid Justice The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014). Robert Mckelvey, *Gift of Barbed Wire America’s Allies Abandoned in South Vietnam* (Vancouver: University of Washington Press, 2014). Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts The Vietnam War and Militarized Refugees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). Alexander Laban, Hilton Pointe, and Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Hidden Genocides Power, Knowledge, Memory* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013). Ian Charles Harris, *Buddhism in a dark age: Cambodian monk under Pol Pot* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013). Martin Gainsborough, *Vietnam Rethinking the State* (London: Zed Books, 2010). Leslie Fielding, *Before the Killing Fields witness to Cambodia and the Vietnam War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008). Kim Ngoc Boc Ninh, *A world transformed: the politics of culture in revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1955* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002).

transition from military rule to representative democracy.<sup>78</sup> Survivors from Thailand have been chosen because of the country of origin of the researcher.

Juxtaposed with this, the methodology I employ is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis assumes that reality is constructed by language and that as such, reality is a social construct.<sup>79</sup> Reality is shaped by language and the social norms according to which we live. The things which are deemed as the Real are problematic. Social existence framed by language or by 'texts' is not compatible with the Real.<sup>80</sup> It is hard for us to be free of the social norms which shape our (social/worldly) understanding. The term 'text' refers to any mediums of the spoken and written word, including: conversations; letters; emails; television programmes; documents; and archives.<sup>81</sup> Texts also include cultural products such as paintings and films, including television programmes, magazines, and so on. Texts show how members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of their identities, beliefs, realities, and subjectivities. We need texts because texts help us to understand the ways in which people identify with their cultures, make sense of the world around them and how they represent it.<sup>82</sup> Texts are essential for us to understand the activities through which people from mainstream and alternative cultures interpret, shape, and reshape realities.<sup>83</sup> They also help us to understand the way that subjectivities are formed. As a consequence of all this, discourse analysis examines the way that knowledge originates from the ways people speak,

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<sup>78</sup> Michael and Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times Traditions and Transformations* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013). Lowe Dittmer, *Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2010). Robert Taylor, Kyaw Yin Hlaing, and Tin Maung Maung Than, *Myanmar: beyond politics to societal imperatives* (Singapore Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005). Monique Skidmore, *Karaoke fascism Burma and the politics of fear* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Marry Callahan, *Making enemies: war and state building in Burma* (Ithaca, New York, and London: Cornell University Press, 2003). Shelby Tucker, *Burma the case of independence* (London: Pluto Press, 2001). Bertil Lintner, *Outrage: Burma's struggle for democracy* (London: White Lotus UK, 1990).

<sup>79</sup> Matthews and Ross, *Research Methods*, 391.

<sup>80</sup> Matthews and Ross, *Research Methods*, 391.

<sup>81</sup> Matthews and Ross, *Research Methods*, 391.

<sup>82</sup> Alan McKee, *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (California and London, Sage Publications Ltd., 2005), 1.

<sup>83</sup> McKee, *Textual Analysis*, 1. Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual analysis for social research* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 36-38.

think, and write. The idea and knowledge derived from the ways people speak, think, and write are inevitably shaped by their social experiences. Social experiences are affected by social norms. Language, belief, ideology, national identity, and so on are social factors that play an important role in this. Here the main argument is that those social factors are embodied in the production and creation of texts.

Since the 1970s it can be said that there are five types of discourse analysis, notably: Positivist; Realist; Marxist; Post-Structuralist; and Post-Marxist. To begin with, Positivists believe that discourse is a frame of thought which creates collective understanding. Positivists take discourse as a unified system of knowledge that closes itself off from others.<sup>84</sup> Realists consider discourse analysis as a way in which language creates a system of thought including abstract concepts. While Realists endeavour to untie the abstraction of concepts structured by language, Marxists see discourse analysis in relation to economic production. From the Marxist perspective, discourse is instrumental for the ideological formation of capitalist order. Discourse is embodied in ideological forms that stop people from questioning the exploitation that takes place in capitalist society. The most prominent figure in post-structuralist discourse analysis is Michel Foucault. 'The discursive formation' is Foucault's term which he uses to demonstrate how the body of knowledge impacts upon people's thought. The body of knowledge that influences our minds and ideas is created by the organisation of several statements. Post-structuralist methodology asks how bodies of knowledge are shaped by language and social norms.<sup>85</sup> The body of knowledge has a prejudice and consists of a point of repression. It intends only to count a particular category of knowledge while excluding other categories from view.<sup>86</sup> In short, Foucault's discourse analysis assumes the distinction between what lies inside and what lies outside of discourse.

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<sup>84</sup> David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>85</sup> Stuart Hall, *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications Ltd. 1997), 191.

<sup>86</sup> Hall, *Representations*, 191.

As noted by Ian Parker and David Pavón-Cuéllar, Foucault's approach to studying the formation of knowledge rests on the distinction between inclusion and exclusion.<sup>87</sup> Relative to Foucault, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argue from a Post-Marxist perspective that discourse is the fixation of social meaning.<sup>88</sup> Social meaning is fixed by discourse, but any such fixation of meaning can only every be partial and temporary. This is the case because 'the openness of the social' means that antagonisms to any established discourse is infinite.<sup>89</sup> David Howarth argues that "antagonisms introduce social experiences, such as the 'failure', 'negativity', and the 'lack'" within the discourse.<sup>90</sup> Laclau and Mouffe argue that radical antagonism can disrupt the unity of discourse whereas antagonism pre-mediated by a discourse will sustain that discourse. The antagonism predetermined by discourse sustains the belief that discourse is not failure, negativity, or a lack. From this consideration, discourse that frames social relations and fixes social meaning has two layers of antagonisms. The two layers of antagonisms are the consequences of antagonisms formed 'inside' and 'outside' of discourse<sup>91</sup>. On the one hand, Laclau and Mouffe see the way in which discourse has framed antagonistic relations between social agents 'inside' a social formation. This way of forming discourse has the objective of making society harmonious. It sustains the national identity constitutive of the self by distinguishing the nation from others such as foreigners, an external enemy, migrants, and political opponents. In effect, this process of internalising antagonism within the discourse strengthens and sustains existing social relations. On the other hand, Laclau and Mouffe see antagonism as *dislocation*, the site of radical antagonism which frames 'outside' discourse.<sup>92</sup> Dislocation is the site of the radical antagonism unmediated pre-

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<sup>87</sup> Ian Parker and David Pavón-Cuéllar, *Lacan, Discourse, Event: New Psychoanalytic Approaches to Textual Indeterminacy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>88</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, "Post-Marxism without Apologies," *New Left Review* 1: 166 (1987), 84.

<sup>89</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London and New York: Verso, 1985), 113.

<sup>90</sup> Howarth, *Discourse*, 106.

<sup>91</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections On the Revolutions of Our Time* (London and New York: Verso, 1990), 17-18.

<sup>92</sup> Laclau, *New Reflections On the Revolutions of Our Time* , 39-41.

discursively by discourse. Thus, it opens a political site where the precariousness and contingency of the unity of discourse can be articulated. In Laclau and Mouffe's account, there are truly radical antagonisms external to the discourse which return to subvert the discourse itself.<sup>93</sup> In effect, 'society is impossible' because the radical antagonisms coterminous with society are indeterminable and unmanageable.

In addition to those five discourse analyses, the discourse analysis I employ throughout the thesis draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis. In one of his seminars, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan unravels his unique four formulas of discourses. Lacan's initial four discourses comprises of the master discourse, the university discourse, the hysteric discourse and the analytic discourse. However, it remains unclear whether Lacan intended these discourses to be used as conceptual tools for the study of politics. A thinker whose work draws on Lacanian theory in order to study politics is Slavoj Žižek. But Žižek's thinking about politics, including his reflections on discourse analysis, rarely tallies with Lacan's four discourses. Rather, his approach to discourse analysis stems from Post-Marxism in combination with 'the ethics of the Real'.<sup>94</sup> Žižek creatively re-interprets Laclau and Mouffe's radical antagonism as the Real. If radical antagonism is the Real, this means that radical antagonism is "a traumatic impossibility and a certain figure which cannot be symbolised".<sup>95</sup> In other words, Žižek has never denied the Post-Marxist account of discourse analysis. He simply links Laclau and Mouffe's antagonism to the Real in Lacan. Žižek states that the homology between Laclau's and Mouffe's antagonism and the Lacanian Real is useful in identifying the positions of subjects in two main ways.<sup>96</sup> On the one hand, there are subjects who comply with the ideological framework; subjects who are 'interpellated' by the

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<sup>93</sup> Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek* (Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999), 92-93.

<sup>94</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis," in *Interrogating the Real*, ed. Rex Butler et al. (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 282.

<sup>95</sup> Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis," 271.

<sup>96</sup> Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis," 271-272.

ideological framework. On the other, there are subjects seeking to realise the dimension of trauma repressed by the ideological framework, in this case, the Lacanian Real. The latter becomes the political space where the subjects undertake trauma and initiate social antagonism. The subjects confront the Real and return to subvert the ideological framework.<sup>97</sup> Žižek's re-interpretation of Laclau and Mouffe's social antagonism drawing on the Lacanian Real to fulfil the task reveals the relationship between Post-Marxism and psychoanalysis.

In his article 'Beyond Discourse Analysis' (2005), Žižek assimilates radical antagonism with the Lacanian Real. His opinion of antagonism which is equated with the Real assimilates with Laclau's and Mouffe's views on antagonism as dislocation. Laclau and Mouffe place emphasis on the unity of the discourse which manages the way the subjects think, and, thus makes society an illusory harmony. Žižek similarly emphasises the way in which subjects are interpellated by the ideological framework, an idea that resonates with Laclau's and Mouffe's. Laclau and Mouffe continue that there are subjects who are dislocated and thus not incorporated in the unity of the discourse. 'Society is impossible' because of the subjects' infinite challenges to the discourse. Žižek correspondingly notes the intransigent subjects who face the traumatic Real as those who can subvert the dominant ideology.<sup>98</sup> His reflections on Laclau's and Mouffe's antagonism resonated with the argument he makes in *Mapping Ideology* (1994) that the fundamental antagonism is a traumatic kernel.<sup>99</sup> The traumatic kernel shows "an imbalance in social relations that prevented the community from stabilising (fantasising) itself into a harmonious whole."<sup>100</sup>

Despite Žižek's attempts to go beyond discourse analysis, what he does is to link Post-Marxist discourse analysis with Lacanian psychoanalysis. In my analysis, Žižek does not deny discourse analysis despite his attempt to move 'beyond discourse analysis'. He

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<sup>97</sup> Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis," 273.

<sup>98</sup> Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis," 273.

<sup>99</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 1994).

<sup>100</sup> Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, 26.

simply relocates Laclau and Mouffe's antagonism by proposing that it is a political project of 'traversing the fantasy' so as to 'encounter the Real', the trauma. The traversal of fantasy, which is imbricated within ideological formations that aim to feel the Real, the trauma, which cannot be covered by any ideals.<sup>101</sup> Here, Žižek's take on radical antagonism as the disruption of ideology simply adds the Real into Post-Marxist discourse analysis. At this point, Lacanian discourse analysis, and particularly the relationship between the Lacanian Real and antagonism, will be employed throughout this thesis. In particular, it is useful in dealing with the politics of survivors in relation to official memory and a resistance to it. I argue that Lacanian discourse analysis fashioned out of Žižek's aggregation of social antagonism and the Real is compatible with 'ultrapolitics'. In chapter 1, I will go into more detail about the relationship between Lacanian discourse analysis and Žižek's account which is linked to his 'critique of ideology'.

Besides the relationship between the Real and Post-Marxist discourse analysis, there are other researchers who have integrated Lacanian psychoanalysis with discourse analysis.<sup>102</sup> Parker and Pavón-Cuéllar suggest that a Lacanian discourse analysis refuses the distinction between the contents that lie inside and outside discourse. This way of thinking is not situated in the same way as Foucault's 'discursive formation'. It rather starts from the assumption that there is something intimate to the subjects. There are something fixing the subjects. There is an element of thought and ideas that are constantly held by subjects, yet paradoxically, these subjects remain unaware of them. The element of thought that lives with the subjects is not external to the subjects. The subjects are just unaware of the thought that lives within and through them. So, the paradox is that what appears to be intimate with the subjects is what appears external to them.

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<sup>101</sup> Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis," 282.

<sup>102</sup> Parker and Pavón-Cuéllar, *Lacan, Discourse, Event*, 41.



The example is the unconscious. The unconscious is a location of thought and knowledge, but subjects do not know that unconscious thought and knowledge are already inside them. This is why Lacan introduces the term 'ex-timacy'. The term shows the simultaneity of the internal and the external in the subjects. The term also refers to the intimacy which is already assumed in subjects but appears illusive, non-existent, and external to them.<sup>103</sup> The inclusion and exclusion in Lacan's discourse analysis has no clear boundary. Exemplified in the unconscious, it is observed that the inclusion overlaps with the exclusion and vice versa. As Foucault does not attend to unconscious, his outright rejection of psychoanalysis makes him overlook the possibility of this 'ex-timate' dimension. If a Foucaultian analysis treats psychoanalysis with care, mutually overlapping inclusions and exclusions can strengthen its analyses.

The question that emerges now is how could we observe and access the unconscious, or, 'the ex-timate'? My response to this question is that we need to pay close attention to language, particularly texts. Language and texts assist us in accessing the unconscious of the subject. In order to understand the unconscious, it is necessary to look at the subjects' activities exercised through language and texts. It has already been suggested that discourse analysis casts doubt upon the idea that knowledge points us towards the Real. However, a consideration of ex-timacy offers a way to get close to the Real and to what subjects have thought. Paying attention to language helps us to understand subjects' unconscious. It helps to point out to the world the Real ex-timate to the subject. Subjects may have in their unconscious political ideology, resistance, subjectivity, intransigence, painful memories, trauma, a fixation with the past, and so on. Those experiences of politics and traumas are already fixed in the subjects but perhaps they do not know them. This is why discourse analysis augmented with a Lacanian outlook that believes in the relationship between

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<sup>103</sup> Parker and Pavón-Cuéllar, *Lacan, Discourse, Event*, 42-43.

language and unconscious offers considerable benefits for researchers. In particular, this approach helps us to understand the testimonies expressed in cultural products such as paintings created by survivors of violence. Research needs to pay close attention to language and texts. Testimony is a text, as well as other cultural products such as films, arts, and so on. If both testimony and paintings are ‘texts’, that will be the way in which we can get access to the unconscious. So, my basic assumption in conducting this research is that testimony and artwork are texts, permitting us access to the unconscious – ‘the ex-timacy’ – of survivors.

In conclusion, this section informs the case studies and research methodology of the thesis. This research is qualitative research. It draws on two research methodologies, notably, a case study approach and a discourse analysis methodology. This thesis draws on case study methodology in order to respond to the first research question. This question asks how and in what way have survivors participated in political protests in the present? I assume that the case study methodology which focuses on contexts and events will help me to respond to this question. Next is the second research question. It asks how and in what way do survivors form their subjectivities in relation to political protests? To respond to this question, the thesis uses Lacanian psychoanalysis and discourse analysis. Psychoanalysis helps identify with the subjectivities of survivors such as desire, drive, and *jouissance* in relation to political protests. Painful memory and the interface with trauma are constituted in the formation of subjectivity too. Discourse analysis is advantageous to the thesis because it helps us to identify with texts and language. Texts such as testimonies and artworks serve as a key to accessing subjectivity. Thought, ideology, and the fixation on the past that we may observe in survivors are embedded in those texts.

## **Chapter Outline**

Overall, the thesis is divided into six main chapters. Chapter 1 illustrates the main theoretical approach that I have taken. Literature on memory theory, political theory, inspired by the works of Žižek, and the Lacanian concepts are all addressed. In particular, I focus on the way that these literature pertain to discussions about survivors, memory, trauma, and political activism. In addition, I also pay particular attention to the problem of social disharmony. Key concepts from Lacanian psychoanalysis help us to understand the relationship between a traumatic incident, survivors, and the formation of subjectivity. The chapter draws together multidisciplinary perspectives, which provide the theoretical basis of the thesis and underpin the following, case-study chapters.

Chapter 2 focuses on the case of Vietnam War survivors. Its main objective is to highlight on the political activities of survivors of the Vietnam War, particularly those who have been active in political organisations that seek to overthrow the existing political regime in Hanoi. These survivors, individually and collectively, possess memories in conflict with the official memory of the Vietnam War, the notorious version prescribed by the Vietnamese government since the Fall of Saigon. The activism of survivors forces a showdown between the memory of the survivor and that of the government; retrieving survivors' memory challenges the official memory and calls into question the legitimacy of the government as a whole. In addition, the chapter suggests that survivors of the Vietnam War, especially those who are living outside of Vietnam, formulate their subjectivities based on painful memories of the war and these experiences are in art production, mainly among the diaspora.

Chapter 3 focuses on Cambodian survivors, who suffered at the hands of the Khmer Rouge regime. The main objective of this chapter is to interrogate why some people, having

survived the Khmer Rouge, decided to hold governmental positions, others have sought to work as members of non-governmental organisations, and why still others have chosen to join the political movement against the government of Hun Sen. Those surviving individuals share collective memory and form their subjectivities in opposition to Pol Pot and his colleagues, but, intriguingly, their memories have been used actively and in diverse ways so as to serve and rationalise their current political activities. Additionally, the chapter discusses the prosecution of Khmer Rouge members and the verdicts made in the special tribunal where survivors of the Pol Pot's secret prison were invited to give a testimony.

The focus of chapter 4 is the survivors of the violence of the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1988 in Myanmar. The main objective is to examine the activities of a political group called 8-8-88 Generation Group, a political movement that campaigns for democracy in Myanmar, formed by surviving persons who strive to fulfil the unfinished mission of the movement for democracy. Aung San Suu Kyi is the moral epicentre of this group; her speech during the election campaign in 2015 reflected her memory and a flashback to the haunting event. It seems that her use of memory was aimed at resolving the political gridlock in Myanmar, in Burmese society and politics under the junta. In addition, the 8-8-88 Generation Group has formed political connections with other likeminded groups across the globe, in order to condemn the junta.

Chapter 5 focuses on the bloodshed of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 in Thailand. It shows that survivors who hold academic positions have played an active role in challenging the existing regime, criticising the friendly relationship between the military and the monarchy upon which it rests. While the previous chapters focus on survivors from diverse backgrounds, ranging from pure political activists, artists, NGO staff, and politicians, this chapter focuses on survivors working in academia. As each case study shows different features and can be distinguished from each other, some overlap and some are totally different, this chapter

examines the political activities of survivors as well as the way they develop their subjectivities in theoretical discussion, which will add a constructive and theoretical dimension to the politics of survivors that supplements the previous three chapters. That is to say, it is my intention to draw out different dimensions of the politics of survivors in each chapter.

Chapter 6 brings all case studies together and analyses them. It may appear that, as the thesis proceeds, all case studies are fractured and we cannot tie them together. That is to say, the Vietnam case study focuses heavily on political movements and the production of art; the Cambodian case explores political movements and, uniquely, the transmission of testimony in tribunals; the Myanmar case shows the way that political movements are used by survivors in identity construction; meanwhile, the chapter on Thailand focuses on the relationship between the political movement and theoretical discussion. My intention is to capitalise on the differences between each case study in order to gain insight into the diverse dimensions of the politics of survivors. I assume that my decision to do so is not irrational. It is impossible for four countries, although geographically located in the same region, to share the same features. What remains important for this thesis, however, is to draw out some unity and similarities in the middle of diversity.

To begin to find this unity in the middle of diversity, I will start by outlining a theoretical framework through which to understand survivors, subjectivity and political activism in Chapter 1.

## **Chapter One**

### **Theorising the Politics of Survivors:**

#### **A Critique of Ideology, A Lacanian Psychoanalysis,**

#### **Trauma and Memory Theories**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to propose theory of the politics of survivors by drawing on four main theories, namely: Žižekian ‘critique of ideology’; Lacanian psychoanalysis; trauma theory; and memory theory. The theory developed in this chapter will serve as a theoretical framework to be applied throughout the thesis. The theory of the politics of survivors developed in this chapter is driven by four major concerns. The first concern is the relationship between the testimony of survivors, language, trauma, consciousness and the unconscious. This relationship implies that if the testimony of survivor is derived from consciousness, it will be a testimony of trauma used for political resistance. Alongside this, there is also a gap between testimony and language. Testimony is incapable of covering the trauma dwelling in subjects, and here there is a trauma that language is incapable of signifying. Second, the theory explores how the works of Slavoj Žižek enable us to think about trauma which is the element of thought and knowledge that ideology endeavours to hide it from the subjects’ perception. Thus, in order to traverse this fantasy, subjects are urged to unmask this naked ideology in order to confront the Real. Moreover, it seems that Žižek’s works are not concerned with exploring how people possessing trauma can act politically. My response to this lacuna in Žižek’s work is to recall his thesis on the idea of ultrapolitics and combine it with Ernesto Laclau’s and Chantal Mouffe’s proposal on subject positions to allow the possibility of thinking of the politics of survivors from a Žižekian perspective.

Third, in addition to the second point, the theory also takes into account the difference between Lacan's Other and the other (*the object petit a*). The Other in this sense serves as the point where desire is stabilised, unmovable, and subjects are summoned to this fixing position. Meanwhile, *the object petit a* is the point where desire can move beyond the fixing position because it conceptually cautions the lack constituted in the desire of the Other. This is significant to the thesis because *the object petit a* is the liberating point where subjects or survivors can shift their desires away from the desire of the Other so to use it for the particular objectives that they want. I argue that survivors have used testimonies in their identity construction and political mobilisation, and, thus, leave behind the desire of the Other in which they are compelled to compromise with the government's imposition of the official memory. It must be noted that the testimony of survivor is not capable of withholding the Real. Thus, it is a testimony that is incomplete but is meaningful for survivors in the service of identity construction and political mobilisation. Fourth, and related to the third point, it is necessary to stress the difference between symptom and the sinthome, especially the latter which is noted in terms of *jouissance* and death drive. While symptom suggests that the desire of the Other or the governmental ideology must cohere as a basis of the knowledge of society, the sinthome pertained to the alternative mode of beings of the subjects which are not translated into the symbolic order. In different aspects from the symbolic order and the Real, the sinthome remains attached to the imaginary position. The sinthome is meaningfully tied with the universe that circulates within the subjects, beyond any social meaning, and the two characters of the sinthome are *jouissance* and death drive. The two terms are important to the thesis. The symptom suggests the survivor to leave behind the fantasy of the official memory and is conscious that the testimony of survivor is perhaps self-enacted as the symptom of the incomplete knowledge. The sinthome, a coexistence of *jouissance* and death drive substantiated in the subjects, portrays a survivor's particular universe, the alternative being,

which is not translated into the world of language. As the sinthome is tied to *jouissance*, it explains why survivors are able to repeat their testimonies to others without feeling depressed. As the sinthome is also tied to the death drive, it explains why survivors are able to perform political activities without fear of death and intimidation, because those activities are typically driven by death. It is as if survivors, in the pursuit of their political activities and ethical obligations, are ready to accept death.

### **Positioning ‘The Split Location of Trauma’: Survivor, Testimony, Trauma, Conscious, and Unconscious**

This section will define trauma and put trauma in the context of language and a theory of psychoanalysis. The main argument of this section is to position the split location of a trauma, that is to say, trauma which is split between the conscious and the unconscious. This so-called ‘split location’ of trauma induces us also to attend to the testimonies of trauma which are controlled by survivors and the trauma that is beyond the control of the testimony and the survivor.

To clearly illustrate our debate, it is important to attend to Cathy Caruth’s well-known definition of trauma in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995). In this ground-breaking work, Caruth suggests that trauma “is the pathology consists solely in the structure of its experience or reception. The event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event.”<sup>1</sup> Caruth’s definition of trauma suggests to us at least two essential ideas about trauma. First, the influence of trauma on those who have experienced trauma and the relationship in terms of temporal dimension to the traumatic

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<sup>1</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 4-5.



situation. Caruth summarises trauma as something that constantly dominates those persons who were forced to endure trauma. However, the experience of trauma does not occur immediately in the particular time and space when a traumatic situation emerged, but only in a delayed fashion. In addition, trauma is opaque in the sense that there is no language, meta-language, or technical term that can represent it. This second point is not new. Jenny Edkins has already made this point in her chapter 'Remembering Relationality'. Following Caruth, Edkins sees trauma as something that continues to haunt the mind of those affected by trauma.<sup>2</sup> However, Edkins continues that trauma resists the symbolic order. Here, I share Edkins' concern: we cannot have a language to represent the opaque character of trauma so as to make it substantial. What we encounter is a lack of language capable of spelling out a clear image of trauma. Trauma is indeed, 'the entity out of bounds' that lives deeply within persons forced to confront violence in the past or present. But unfortunately those persons are not able to depend on language to communicate trauma to others, and they, for the purposes of our thesis, are survivors.

The definition of trauma provided by Caruth is slightly different from the definition given by Bessel Van Der Kolk and Onno Van Der Hart. Their definition of trauma is that trauma is "the affectivity of depressed memory that constantly destroys the sufferers."<sup>3</sup> This definition is problematic because it is based on an assumption that trauma will forever remain to pose a danger to sufferers, as if to suggest that the sufferers are unable to overthrow trauma. More sadly, Van Der Kolk's and Van Der Hart's analyses implies that the two psychiatrists are indifferent to the attempts of survivors to speak trauma to others. Ignoring the problem of language, testimony, and trauma, their views are based only on the clinical setting and only

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<sup>2</sup> Jenny Edkins, "Remembering Relationality: Trauma Time and Politics," in *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship Between Past and Present*, ed. Duncan Bell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 107.

<sup>3</sup> Bessel A. Van Der Kolk and Onno Van Der Hart "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and The Engraving of Trauma," in *Trauma Explorations in Memory*, Cathy Caruth (ed.) (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 158.

focus on trauma as a mental disorder that afflicts sufferers. In contrast, our utmost concern here is that the spelling out of trauma compels us to address the relationship between trauma and the problem of language. In the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, the something that language cannot give a clear and full meaning to is what Lacan calls the Real and he suggests that the meaning of the Real is “a resistance to signification.”<sup>4</sup> This means that we are confronting the image, the existence, and the relationality of the Real ‘that is not part of the symbolic order’ because ‘there is no language for it’.

It is by now important to attend to Žižek’s useful conceptualisation of the Lacanian Real in order to elaborate on our definition of trauma in relation to the Real. What is the Real? The precise meaning of the Real is “the shocking encounter which, precisely, DISTURBS this immersion into one’s life world, a violent of something which does not fit in” (capital letter in original).<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly, Žižek’s analysis of the Real here is in agreement with Caruth’s and Edkins’s understanding of trauma, although Žižek is not generally known as a trauma theorist. In retrospect, and gradually step by step, we can see the role of the Real as ‘the shocking encounter’. For trauma researchers, this definition means that trauma can be understood as the shocking encounter in the same sense as Caruth interprets trauma as ‘the pathology [that] consists solely in the structure of its experience or reception’ (see the above paragraph). Žižek continues that ‘the Real disturbs this immersion into one’s life world’. This is not incompatible with Caruth’s definition of trauma as something that possesses and repeats itself in the suffering persons. To some extent, this line of analysis may make Žižek’s analysis similar to that of Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart. The two psychiatrists assert that trauma is a mental disturbance that gradually destroys a person; so too Žižek’s analysis which shows trauma as a disturbance of one’s life world. However, the last line suggests a slight separation between Žižek’s analysis that of the psychiatrists. The Real is ‘a violent of

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<sup>4</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, 129.

<sup>5</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 37.

something which does not fit in' and here Lacanian psychoanalysis calls on us to attend to the problem in terms of the communication of trauma. This is not to forget Edkins's analysis, which serves as a demonstration that the Real or the trauma is not part of the symbolic order and there is no language capable of representing either. Eventually, we are now able to link the work of Caruth, Edkins, and Žižek with regards to our understanding of trauma and its discontent in terms of its (in)effective communication to others.

Accordingly, it is important to ask one question alongside with the problem of language and trauma, that is, whether trauma is located in the conscious or the unconscious? If trauma is located in the consciousness, this will enable traumatised persons to communicate trauma without much need to struggle over language. But if trauma is located in the unconscious, we will need to attend to the unsolved conflict between trauma, communication, testimony, and the unconscious. To begin with, Laura Brown suggests that the aim of psychoanalysis is to retell the lost truths of pain.<sup>6</sup> Here, it remains far from clear whether a retrieval of the lost story is embedded in the conscious or the unconscious of survivors. In this regard, the location of trauma is indeed a problematic point. On the one hand, if trauma is located in the conscious, the speaking out of traumas will be the acting out<sup>7</sup> so composure with which the acting out of trauma will look like a calculation to tell stories in advance.<sup>8</sup> On the other, if trauma is located in the unconscious, traumas may be revealed to the world in the form of inadvertent acts beyond the intention of survivors.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we must crucially note a 'gap' between the conscious and the unconscious. For instance, if the relationship between trauma and the conscious is the case in point, trauma will be disseminated through artworks, film productions, TV programs, script-reading, and academic publications because in these precise senses traumas are bound to the intention of survivors.

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<sup>6</sup> Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, "The Intrusive Past", 165-166.

<sup>7</sup> Kelley Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 79.

<sup>8</sup> Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, "The Intrusive Past", 167.

<sup>9</sup> Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart, "The Intrusive Past", 165.

If trauma is located in the unconscious, however, trauma will appear in symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, and dreams. And if the unconscious is the location of trauma, this will fit with Edkins's analysis of trauma as something that we lack the language to utter. At this point, it must be noted that there is a huge difference between trauma which is *acted out intentionally* and trauma which is *acted out spontaneously*.

This fundamental difference in terms of the position of trauma means that the task of positioning trauma is not an easy one. This problem of language in relation to the split location of trauma resonated with Lacan's basic assumption about 'the split subject'. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Lacan underscores difference between conscious and unconscious. What remains crucial in his thesis is the true-place where subjectivity dwells.<sup>10</sup> Lacan does not offer a precise answer to this question; he does not point out the exact location of subjectivity, whether it lies in the conscious or the unconscious. Nonetheless, we get a clue from the fact that his articulation is marked by the key word 'split'.<sup>11</sup> In Lacanian theory, subjectivity must be seen as a 'split'<sup>12</sup> which implies that it is unclear whether subjectivity is articulated from the conscious or the unconscious. In an attempt to position trauma, I believe that it is possible to follow the Lacanian assumption of split subjectivity that allows us also to think about the split location of trauma.

From these considerations, if survivors are able to give testimony of trauma from their full consciousness, testimony will be understood as the complete first-hand description of the catastrophic events of political violence, in which they were forced to bear witness to those events.<sup>13</sup> If this is the case, testimony is optimistic and truthful because "the testimony [must] consists of what the survivor believes is true; if they know that they are lying, then it is not

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<sup>10</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire" in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 306.

<sup>11</sup> Lacan, "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire," 306.

<sup>12</sup> Lacan, "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire," 351.

<sup>13</sup> Stevan Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe: Narrating the Traumas of Political Violence* (Evanston and Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 35.

testimony”.<sup>14</sup> Stevan Weine’s observation to the meaning of testimony is helpful. For him, “the term testimony is used to signify the stories told by survivors of political violence, including torture, genocide, and war...there is no one reason for telling, nor one way of telling or listening, nor one type of story.”<sup>15</sup> In relation to the consciousness of survivors, it is necessary in practice to understand the ways in which testimonies are conditioned by different purposes and political ideologies. Weine also warns that testimony can be politicised, decontextualized, objectified, and used in different ways.<sup>16</sup> However, such acts may lead testimonies’ legitimacy and credibility being called into question.<sup>17</sup> Weine’s analysis is vital as it suggests the possibility that survivors’ testimonies are not without survivors’ intention to make use of testimonies for different purposes. To reiterate our examples, traumas are represented not only through testimonies, but also through other ‘texts’ such as documentaries, films, and arts. If trauma is conveyed in this way, it will appear as if there is a fully-conscious plan to speak trauma in advance.

But the thinking on trauma, testimony, and the survivor must not end here. Lacan’s notion of the ‘split subject’ suggests that trauma also has a quality of a ‘slip of trauma’ emanating from the unconscious. As Andrew Slade argues, trauma takes place in the realm of the unconscious and the unconscious is where trauma may come out naturally in contrast to a meticulous plan to speak about the trauma as found in the conscious.<sup>18</sup> Through the unconscious, trauma is ‘acted out’ and repeated automatically regardless of the intention of survivors. It is a legacy of Sigmund Freud that trauma is an unconscious which can be ‘acted

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<sup>14</sup> Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, xvi.

<sup>16</sup> Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, xiii.

<sup>17</sup> Weine, *Testimony After Catastrophe*, xiii.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Slade, *Lyotard, Beckett, Duras and the Postmodern Sublime* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.: 2007), 115.

out' in unspecific circumstances.<sup>19</sup> Particularly, Freud suggests that trauma can be expressed through 'the slip' and as such, he speaks about the famous 'the slip of the tongue'. Trauma can be expressed non-discursively in the incomprehensible images of dreams, fantasies, drives, hallucinations, and obsessive fixations. In those dimensions, trauma slips beyond the human control of the conscious. This raises the problems of seeking the most suitable words and language to represent this uncanny, slipping image of a trauma.

The challenge is how to represent the uncanny images of traumas in full and transparent images. Slade suggests that "unconscious is the inner human which is registered as an alien voice, a voice that is not my voice...It is a voice that I struggle to render into a phrase, a voice whose idiom requires that I seek it out, whose final expression would signal the advent of peace or death."<sup>20</sup> Unconscious is distinct from the conscious but, despite humans' reluctance to accept its existence, it is inherently part of human subjectivity. In retrospect, the unconscious is an alien voice, 'a voice that is not my voice', that is embodied linguistically and is uncertain whether it will lead to the path of peace or death. The unconscious dwells in survivors, but it speaks to survivors in a way that survivors cannot control. These voices that speak 'not really *from* my behalf but eventually *on* my behalf' are found in all living beings that have subjectivities. In a sense, the unconscious is the non-human that humans possess. For survivors, the unconscious is the inhuman, uncanny image of trauma that stays with them. Survivors, whose subjectivities which are torn apart, vulnerable to violence, solemnly unable to erase trauma, have this non-human dimension at the heart of their innermost human subjectivities. The most difficult part for survivors is to find language and words to illuminate it, to share to others, whose lives are in distance to the trauma. Survivors are barely able to carry out testimony replete with a thinking of the

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<sup>19</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland and Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1991), 316.

<sup>20</sup> Slade, *Lyotard, Beckett, Duras and the Postmodern Sublime*, 115.

unconscious, 'the alien/phantomatic voice'. In effect, survivors, unable to resist the unconscious that has freedom over them, begin to lose their abilities to control their mind.<sup>21</sup>

Lacanian psychoanalysis induces us to see 'a gap' in terms of the location of trauma and it demands that we interpret discourse,<sup>22</sup> and in this thesis testimony, in these terms. Testimony offers a chance for survivors to disseminate their experiences to an audience. Testimony is not unrelated to the cultural context that shapes it. In other words, testimony becomes a public configuration of memory and this means that public memory is shaped by the cultural context surrounding it.<sup>23</sup> The first struggle facing survivors who give testimonies is how and in what way to use testimonies, their painful memory, to affect audiences. The first struggle shows survivors, in full consciousness of their actions, using testimony for political and ideological purposes. The second struggle, however, is that survivors face difficulties putting their traumatic experiences into words. The struggle with language, to confront its limitation, compels survivors to deal with the uncanny image of trauma. How is a survivor able to convey the blurry, black-and-white image clearly and transparently? How is one survivor able to reveal to others the traumas that have been dwelling in their personal unconscious, especially when trauma is likely to come in the form of interrupted hallucination? This is the same question as to ask how to stop the freedom of the unconscious. How is one survivor able to transform the unconscious, the uncannily uncontrollable, into a form of dominant sign system?<sup>24</sup> How is one survivor able to control the alien voices that actively speak not from his/her behalf but eventually becomes part of his/her behalf? This entity of trauma which is beyond the control of survivors and of the language that is used to communicate it, is enacted itself as 'a phantom'.

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<sup>21</sup> Slade, *Lyotard, Beckett, Duras and the Postmodern Sublime*, 114.

<sup>22</sup> Lacan, "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire," 307-308.

<sup>23</sup> Jennifer Griffiths, *Traumatic Possessions: The Body and Memory in African American Women's Writing and Performance* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Griffiths, *Traumatic Possessions*, 5.

A phantom is a specific kind of trauma that humans cannot speak and write about clearly. Language is incapable of representing a full image of trauma in terms of a society's dominant cultural codes/texts. This means that those traumas which can be communicated, woven into dialogue, or expressed eloquently and in full, are not phantoms; these are strikingly well remembered memories that register in the symbolic order. Jennifer Griffiths suggests that there is always an alternative meaning of trauma within the survivor, who bears with him or her in daily life the aspects of traumas that have been effaced from the dominant cultural framework.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, this recognition means that we can say more about the interrelation between trauma, conscious, unconscious, and the testimony of survivor. That is to say, we need to mark a difference between language that tries to register trauma in a symbolic order such as in a survivor's testimony, and an uncanny trauma of trauma that self-characterises as a phantom which transcends language's ability to signify meaning. Put differently, the distinction also places the use of testimony in relation to the symbolic order and the Real. On the one hand, as Weine argues, we can imagine that when survivors use a testimony of a trauma, such as to condemn the government responsible for massacre, this exemplifies a testimony that registers in the symbolic order. On the other, as Griffiths suggests, we can imagine that there is an alternative meaning of trauma that survivors have to endure alone and by themselves, and this trauma never registers in the symbolic order. Trauma in this sense is a phantom, or an 'alien voice' (Slade). In short, it is the Real.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Griffiths, *Traumatic Possessions*, 5.

<sup>26</sup> The Real, as Žižek puts it in other of his works and in some interview occasions. In *Tarrying with the Negative* (1993), for instance, he describes the Real as something that "designates a substantial hard kernel that precedes and resists symbolisation and, simultaneously, it designates the left-over, which is posited or 'produced' by symbolisation itself." I take this point from him so to make it appropriate to my thinking on trauma. Trauma, especially when trauma is understood as a phantom is apparently sharing the identity of the Real, "a hard kernel that resists symbolisation...the leftover". Moreover, in his conversation with Glyn Daly in 2004, he explains it as follows "for Lacan, the Real is not impossible in the sense that it can never happen – a traumatic kernel which forever eludes our grasp. No, the problem with the Real is that it happens and that is the trauma. A trauma, or an act, is simply the point when the Real happens, and this is difficult to accept. The point is that you can encounter the Real, and that is what is so difficult to accept". This guides me to a trauma conceptualisation, the Real when it happens especially as a phantom, is difficult to accept and even hard to accept its existence. See for full references as for our discussions in: Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the*



To summarise what I have argued in this section, the location of a trauma in relation to a testimony that represents it is characterised as a split image. On the one hand, trauma is enabled through the survivor's consciousness while the unconscious imposes scepticism to a truthful testimony which is connected to consciousness, on the other. In order to grasp the full image of painful memory of survivors through assessing their testimony, it is necessary to take into account both the conscious and the unconscious. In addition to the way that trauma is represented in memoirs, documentaries, artefacts, public speech, and tribunals; trauma is also expressed through dreams, nightmares, and flashbacks where traumas stem from the unconscious; no language is able to illustrate those images with clarity. Cathy Caruth's observation that trauma is a pathology of mental experience that moves to possess and to repeat itself in the mind of those who possess it, is a good starting point of thinking about trauma critically. In addition, Lacan refers to the Real as 'a substantial hard kernel that precedes and resists symbolisation', which makes it a key concept through which to grasp the problem of the representation of trauma in relation to language, testimony, and the unconscious; trauma in this sense is a phantom and has the freedom to repeat itself beyond subjects' control. In the next section, our concern will no longer be the location/position of trauma. Rather, the main consideration will be a critique of ideology, antagonism, discourse analysis, and subject positions in relation to what I call the politicisation of trauma.

### **Politicising Trauma: Overviewing Žižek's Work on Ideology, Trauma, and 'Survivors in Ultrapolitics'**

The objective of this section is to review the work of Žižek in relation to the question of ideology and trauma. Žižek's 'critique of ideology' and its relationship to the Real leads the thesis to formulate the conceptual distinction between 'the Ideological-trauma' and 'the

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*Critique of Ideology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 36. Slavoj Žižek and Glyn Daly, *Conversations with Žižek* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 69-70.

Real-trauma'. In addition, the thesis also reviews some of the essential works of Žižek that focus on the proletariat as the subject of political resistance. The main concern is to reject some aspects of Žižek's thought, and to develop it in another direction. To do this, I suggest recalling some aspect of Žižek's ultrapolitics together with the idea of subject positions and political subjectivities established in the work of Laclau and Mouffe. Consequently, I suggest this is a way for the politics of survivors to be placed into a dialogue with Žižek's work.

In thinking critically about trauma theory and the politics of survivors, the thesis draws inspiration from Slavoj Žižek's 'critique of ideology'; a concept which was a central tenet of his early works (1990-2006). The Žižekian critique of ideology can be found in many of his works. To begin with, in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), he takes ideology as a "fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our 'reality' itself".<sup>27</sup> Fantasy, in its fundamental principle, serves as the effective social relations that repress the Real, trauma, and the impossibility of society.<sup>28</sup> Ideology allows us to continue our lives without perceiving trauma, or the Real, which is constantly knotted within our reality. He maintains this point in *For They Know Not What They Do* (1991), when he argues that the Real which pertains to the disillusionment of reality is hidden by the Symbolic. The Symbolic is the ideology that 'pulls the string'. In effect, the Imaginary is inaccessible to the psychic and traumatic experience of society, including itself.<sup>29</sup> In *Mapping Ideology* (1993), he condemns ideology as a 'lie in the guise of truth' because it renounces the very notion of extra-ideological reality. Ideology compels us to accept the outcome of its social construction. Through ideological establishment, what we are dealing with is in effect simply symbolic fictions, and not the Real itself.<sup>30</sup> Žižek develops this idea further in *Tarrying with*

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<sup>27</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1989), 45.

<sup>28</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a political factor*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London and New York: Verso Books, 2002), xciv.

<sup>30</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1994), 8-17.

*the Negative* (1993), when he argues that any ideology which is affirmed must be aided by social beliefs and practices. Apart from reducing ideology to social belief and political doctrine, ideology's role is to create enjoyment for subjects, to make them enjoy their national identities. The role of fantasy is pinpointed in *The Plague of Fantasy* (1997), when Žižek argues that fantasy sustains reality in illusion, and makes everyone enjoy society as false consciousness.<sup>31</sup> In effect, trauma is conceptually maintained as an uninvited quality, threatening to disrupt this enjoyment of national identity formed by ideology.<sup>32</sup>

However, at the very end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Žižek seemed to take his analysis of ideology and trauma in a new direction. In *The Ticklish Subject* (1999), for instance, Žižek shows how ideology is constituted with trauma. Rather than maintaining separation between the two, Žižek sees ideology as a power that intervenes to integrate trauma in the symbolic network. Ideology has the objective of making subjects mutually recognise trauma, rather than isolating trauma from subjects' recognitions. A quotation from *The Ticklish Subject* suggests that trauma is the element that can be "integrated into the symbolic network of mutual recognition, which is the result of a process in which traumatic cuts, 'repressions', and the power struggle intervene, not something primordially given."<sup>33</sup> In *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* (2001), he argues that the potential emancipation from ideology should not be effected by opposing ideology directly, but rather opposition can come from within ideology. According to Žižek, the official ideology does not want its people to take ideology literally.<sup>34</sup> As ideology simply stands for the deeper reality than the reality itself, ideology in its essence is fake.<sup>35</sup> In Žižek's words, "the greatest catastrophe for the regime would have

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<sup>31</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1997), 66.

<sup>32</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 202.

<sup>33</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1999), 274.

<sup>34</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2001), 131

<sup>35</sup> Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, 30.

been for its own ideology to be taken seriously, and realised by the subjects.”<sup>36</sup> This statement is implied that the official ideology wants its subjects ‘not to take ideology seriously’ but to start acknowledging the trauma, the omitted Real that ideology obscures.

Accordingly, in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002) Žižek encourages us to revise our way of thinking about ideology in relation to trauma and the Real. In Žižek’s view, we have a tendency to believe in ideology without having a true understanding of the meaning of ideology.<sup>37</sup> Ideology, he suggests in the same way as he argued in the *Ticklish Subject*, has made us confront a trauma that the ideology calculates we can eventually accept. In other words, ideology upholds some acceptable qualities of trauma while casting aside its radical aspects; an antagonism that ideology knows is impossible for us to accept. This is an ideology that enacts itself as ‘the reality of the virtual’, a phrase that Žižek coined in *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (2004). ‘The reality of the virtual’ is a consequence of the symbolic order that self-functions to guarantee enjoyment without perception of any threats.<sup>38</sup> This means that traumas which are too much for us to accept are purposefully removed, so that we can resume enjoying the society without anxiety that the society will one day collapse. For Žižek, this explains why humans tend to believe ideology without having a true understanding of the meaning of that ideology.

In effect, we live with virtual ideologies that are selective in showing the qualities of trauma. These virtual ideologies prevent us from confronting extreme traumas which are more radical. It is implicit in Žižek’s analysis that we are living with an ideology, ‘the reality of the virtual’, and that most of us cannot see this delusional function. Ultimately, in order to confront the Real, or the true essence of trauma, all we have to do is to put ideology in ‘a

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<sup>36</sup> Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*, 92.

<sup>37</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2002), 70.

<sup>38</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 3-4.

parallax view'. This analysis culminated in the book that Žižek describes as his *magnum opus*, *The Parallax View* (2006). Ideology, he reminds us, enacts itself as a sublime object of desire. When ideology succeeds as an object of desire for subjects, it delivers itself to us as the fantasy, the sentimental factor that gives support to the ideological establishment; to hide the Real, to enable us to continue living without confronting trauma.<sup>39</sup> But to put ideology in a parallax view means to encourage us to flip side this ideological establishment in order to see ideology in and from different positions. The result of seeing ideology in and from different position is that the trauma is constantly assumed even before the ideology can repress it. If we confront the Real that is assumed to exist before ideology, Žižek argues that “the cohesive power of ideology [begins to] loses its efficiency.”<sup>40</sup> In order to cope with the Real, ideology is self-assigning as a signifier, ‘a quilting point’ which enables society to continue unharmed, regardless of traumas.<sup>41</sup>

Following Žižek’s early works outlined in the previous paragraphs, I argue that we can identify two types of traumas: the Ideological-trauma and the Real-trauma. Trauma can be understood as the Ideological-trauma when it helps to nurture existing political power, while the Real-trauma can be understood as trauma that survivors have used in testimonies to challenge the Ideological-trauma of the state. As argued earlier, in *The Ticklish Subject*, Žižek points out that trauma is a call from the symbolic network, demanding all citizens to mutually recognise a specific trauma. Trauma is embodied in the ideological edifice. It intervenes and calls on citizens to embrace it. It remains true that men are born free, but as a good citizen it is his responsibility to be consciously aware of the injunction of state ideology invested on them. Žižek points out as quoted above that trauma is basically something that “integrated into the symbolic network of mutual recognition, which is the result of a process

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<sup>39</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge and Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006), 41.

<sup>40</sup> Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 37.

in which traumatic cuts, ‘repressions’, and the power struggle intervene, not something primordially given.”<sup>42</sup> He suggests that trauma is dependent on the symbolic network that sustains it, but at the same time, it also helps make social relations among people possible. As a result, the Ideological-trauma is not unrelated to the official memory that aims to promote national identities, complacencies, and enjoyments. It is implied in *Tarrying with the Negative*, for instance, that trauma is used to construct national identity. In this case, it is the Ideological-trauma that is being used. The Ideological-trauma is the trauma that determines the enjoyment of the nation and it is for this reason that it is unacceptable for other nationalities to intervene and deprive the nation of this enjoyment.<sup>43</sup> For Žižek, the construction of the enjoyment of a nation that leads to complacency is an obscenity; therefore, trauma in this practice of political ideology is the obscene trauma. Žižek’s criticism implies that this ideological trauma, though mystic in its character, is well accepted by most citizens of the particular nation. What is underscored here is the continuity of a myth without referring to any efforts to deconstruct or to re-interrogate it. Problematically, the Ideological-trauma is a mystical thing, yet it is well accepted by citizens of the nation without being deconstructed or being undermined.<sup>44</sup> In the pursuit of hegemony, the Ideological-trauma swept across all citizens and settled them through a process of subjectification. If hegemony of this kind is complete, the Ideological-trauma will provide no space for resistance/antagonism.

However, in some literature, Žižek seems to point out trauma differently to how it was articulated in *The Ticklish Subject* and *Tarrying with the Negative*. His writings on this subject suggests that trauma can be a vector for social resistance. In *On Belief* (2001), Žižek defines trauma as “something one is not able to remember, i.e. to recollect by way of making

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<sup>42</sup> Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*, 274.

<sup>43</sup> Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, 178, 202.

<sup>44</sup> Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, 202.

it part of one's symbolic narrative; as such, it repeats itself indefinitely, returning to haunt the subject – more precisely, what repeats itself is the very failure, impossibility even, to repeat/recollect the trauma properly.”<sup>45</sup> In Žižek's view, trauma is something that cannot be integrated in the symbolic order. This point implies that trauma is the Real; the Real trauma. It is hard for trauma to be framed in a visible narrative. Rather than being integral to the symbolic order, traumas are mystical images that remain unknown to the symbolic narrative. Again, as quoted above, “trauma designates a shocking encounter which, precisely, DISTURBS this immersion into one's life world, a violent of something which does not fit in. (capitalisation in original)”<sup>46</sup> While the Ideological-trauma tries to mobilise all citizens together to sustain social order, the Real trauma is ‘a shocking encounter’ opposed to the symbolic order. It is now safe to say that as a political factor, trauma can be politicised in two possible ways: either as the Ideological-trauma or the Real-trauma. Thus, in contrast to the Ideological-trauma, the Real-trauma is located outside the symbolic order. Potentially, the Real-trauma delineates a ‘gap’ inside the symbolic order which, when introduced, urges a reinterpretation of reality. Rooted in the Lacanian Real, the Real-trauma is something that “precisely breaks, interrupts, the continuity of the causal link: what we get is not a complete, uninterrupted, causal link, but the repercussions, the after-shocks, of traumatic interruptions. It [the Real] separates (the ideological/social construction of) trauma, and renders palpable the gap that separates them.”<sup>47</sup> Both the Ideological-trauma and the Real-trauma have been addressed in International Politics literature, and it is feasible here to recall the *sui generis* insights of Jenny Edkins. Edkins writes that “the utopia of a complete social whole without antagonism would lead to totalitarianism,”<sup>48</sup> which I argue offers a well thought out take on Ideological-trauma as well as the Real-trauma. Relative to the Ideological-trauma, Edkins's

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<sup>45</sup> Žižek, *On Belief*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> Žižek, *On Belief*, 47.

<sup>47</sup> Žižek, *On Belief*, 86-87.

<sup>48</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations Bringing the Political Back In* (Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 118.

suggestion is that totalitarianism is equivalent to the Ideological-trauma because of its closure to anything that might challenge it. However, there is also an element of resistance in Edkins's suggestion too, and the keyword here is, of course, 'resistance'. It is clear that Edkins insists on social antagonism against the utopianism of totalitarian control. Edkins's social antagonism is the Real-trauma, and I adopt this point so as to add the political movement of survivors as one of the possible paradigms of the Real trauma. Without opening a discussion over the Real-trauma, it would be likely that all citizens will be haplessly subordinated to the manipulation of state ideology.

To recapitulate, I argue in the introductory chapter that there is a similarity between Žižek's 'critique of ideology' and the 'discourse analysis' proposed by Laclau and Mouffe. Žižek, Laclau, and Mouffe all seem to be opposed to the view that ideology is determinant in shaping and constituting subjects. In common, they have found themselves repudiating Althusser's belief that ideology is an apparatus that overrides the autonomy of social agents. Every social agent lacks autonomy because they are immersed in the political ideology that shapes them. Žižek remains adamant in criticizing the predominant role of ideology of its construction of reality because ideology deflects the subjects from confronting the Real, trauma. While Žižek's revolt against ideology's concealment of the Real shows that ideology is ultimately untenable, Laclau and Mouffe do something similar when they introduce the term 'the logic of difference'. They suggest this term to indicate the 'disarticulated element' which is embedded in the discursive order. This disarticulated element, in my interpretation, is equivalent to the traumatic Real imagined by Žižek. The discourse is not incomplete; its existence must be interrogated in order to incorporate the disarticulated element, which in Žižek's account is the Real. This shows that discourse is in need of being self-dialecticised, to extensively incorporate the disarticulated element, and to critically accept its self-destabilisation. This is a point shared by Žižek, Laclau, and Mouffe. My interpretation of



Žižek here is that, on this point at least, Žižek is not so very different from a discourse analyst.

However, a difference between the position of Žižek on the one hand and the positions of Laclau and Mouffe on the other is their account of political subjectivities and subject positions. For Laclau and Mouffe, subject positions and political subjectivities are diverse and seem to be fragmentary in relation to the expansion of discourses. Laclau and Mouffe assume that because individuals can oppose many discourses and individuals can also identify with many political positions, subjectivity is also diverse. The subject positions are contingent and individuals are formed in respect to their multiple decisions in becoming different types of social and political actors at the same time. Thus, in Laclau and Mouffe's work, political subjectivity is not a singularity. The individual is understood in terms of multiple forms of enacting themselves politically, which means that references to 'subjectivity' in their analyses should rather be noted as 'subjectivities'.

While Laclau and Mouffe talk about identification with discourse and withdrawals, or, the *dis*-identifications from discourses altogether, Žižek disagrees with these hypotheses on the multiplicity of subject positions. In contrast to Laclau and Mouffe, Žižek's late works (2008-2016) no longer emphasise the critique of ideology, but are very explicit in arguing that the proletariat is the only form of political subjectivity, and talking about 'subjectivities' is misguided. In fact, it is not surprising at all that Žižek should make this argument. As early as 1998, he demonstrated this commitment in a paper commenting on Jacques Rancière's separation between *polis* (a regulatory mode for the maintenance of order) and politics (the emergence of the part of no part that emerges to challenge *polis*, something which means that political agency in Rancière's political thought remains largely ambiguous and is not easily determined). Žižek speaks on behalf of the Marxist tradition which has decisive ideas about how this gap should be closed. He authoritatively closes Rancière's

politics by noting that only “[the] proletariat can be read as the subjectivisation of the part of no part that elevates its injustice into the ultimate test of universality and, simultaneously, as the operator that will bring about the establishment of a post-political, rational society”.<sup>49</sup> In short, a difference between Žižek’s political subjectivity on the one hand, and Laclau and Mouffe’s political subjectivities on the other is the former’s emphasis on the proletariat as the legitimate form of subjectivity in politics, while the latter opens the possibility of accounting for political subjectivities and manifold social antagonisms more freely than the former.

Accordingly, this discussion must be raised in the thesis. The thesis is concerned with the politics of survivors and it adopts a Žižekian perspective on politics. However, on several occasions Žižek seems to appoint the proletariat as the only subjectivity capable of overthrowing the existing ideology. Moreover, his political analysis has no concern on the politics of survivors. His indifference to the individuals living with trauma as a consequence of enduring violence is obvious on several occasions. He has a tendency to judge people with trauma as people with no potential for political resistance. I now want to illustrate some examples based on his latest works (2009-2016). In his book *In Defense of Lost Causes* (2009), Žižek writes that violence is a necessary condition for the democratic revolution to emerge. It must be a truly significant form of violence, however, and different from other forms of violence such as the terrorist violence in Paris in 2005.<sup>50</sup> Most subjective violence, including violence enacted in the name of God (divine violence), goes astray, Žižek argues in *Violence* (2008), because this violence is simply an empty sign without meaning.<sup>51</sup> Yet, for Žižek, only ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’ is the historically proper subject of political violence.<sup>52</sup> Žižek’s analysis in *Living in the End Times* (2011) celebrates the proletariat as

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<sup>49</sup> Slavoj Žižek, ‘A Leftist Plea for ‘Eurocentrism’’ in *The Universal Exception: Selected Writings, Volume Two*. ed, Rex Butler et al. (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 184.

<sup>50</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador Books, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Žižek, *Violence*, p. 169.

<sup>52</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2009), 285, 416.

capable of recognising the core problem of the existing ideology while underestimating individuals who had faced a trauma as politically incapable.<sup>53</sup> Žižek's perspective resonates with orthodox Marxism and shows that he is absolutely hostile to advocates of liberal democracy.

This hostility is evident in *Against the Double Blackmail* (2016), where Žižek suggests that the way to manage the current migration 'problem' in Europe is not through tolerating cultural difference, the solution proposed by the European liberals and postcolonial theorists. Rather, he asserts that the only solution in the long term is "a radical economic change that abolishes the condition that creates refugees."<sup>54</sup> This implies that the only option is proletariats' political action to overthrow the existing social and economic relations. In addition, it is important to mention two articles that Žižek published on the internet in June and August 2016, respectively. In these articles, Žižek maintains his political analysis concentrating on the role of the emancipatory Left. In the article published in August, he decries Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton as the double blocs of global capitalist consensus.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, in the article published in June, he condemns the British 'Vote Leave' campaign in the referendum on European Union membership as a false national consciousness of Britain. For him, the true emancipatory politics for Britain is not to choose to remain uncomplainingly in the European Union either, but to rather think about the economic conditions that stifle all European countries.<sup>56</sup>

However, the term ultrapolitics that he proposed in 1998 can reposition Žižek's 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the context of the politics of survivors. In this specific

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<sup>53</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Time* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2011), 241.

<sup>54</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

<sup>55</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "Clinton, Trump and the Triumph of Global Capitalism," *In These Times*, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://inthesetimes.com/article/19410/clinton-trump-and-the-triumph-of-ideology>

<sup>56</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "Could Brexit Breathe New Life into Left-Wing Politics?," *Newsweek*, accessed July 24, 2016, in <http://europe.newsweek.com/brexit-eu-referendum-left-wing-politics-europe-zizek-474322?rm=eu>

occasion, I propose that Žižek has something more than Žižek knows of himself. That is to say, he may not know that he has already proposed something which can be connected to me as a researcher on the politics of survivors. In 1998, he nonetheless defined ultrapolitics as “the repressed of political returns in the guise of the attempt to resolve the deadlock of political conflict by its false radicalisation [and] by reformulating it as a war between us and them where there is no common ground for symbolic conflict.”<sup>57</sup> According to the statement, the space of antagonism in politics is defined by its capacity to cause disruption within the existing order. It is the space that is created and reformulated by any revolting anonymous groups, because ‘there is no common ground for symbolic conflict’. Freedom, in this sense, is a freedom to formulate a space of political conflict. Based on the full freedom of initiating antagonism without the controls of the symbolic, the space of political antagonism in its nature is elusive and far from clearly signified. Moreover, political antagonism tends to stabilise itself by creating (virtually) a political enemy. But, the political enemy and the position of the subject can be changed because any repressed groups can reformulate a war between us and them in other directions. In effect, it can be said that there is no one single scenario that can represent political antagonism because antagonisms can be inaugurated and reintroduced over time as a result of perpetual reformulations.

Here, my argument is that Žižek does not know that he has something more in his own thought. Other key accounts such as those of survivors and those facing traumas which can emerge to reformulate this space of political antagonism in ultrapolitics. The space of antagonism can be reformulated to other directions by others, such as survivors and the survivor’s hostility to the Ideological-trauma proposed in this thesis. Thus, Žižek’s ultrapolitics is not defined by a single political subjectivity, but by what is evoked by Laclau and Mouffe as political subjectivities. The consequence of this is that there is a space for the

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<sup>57</sup> Žižek, “A Leftist Plea for “Eurocentrism”, 187.

politics of survivors in the field of ultrapolitics. If there is an ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the politics of survivors, it will be an ‘us’ and ‘them’ different than Žižek’s ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. Eventually, I adopt Žižek’s ultrapolitics to develop my thinking of the politics of survivors in two ways. On the one hand, I try to withdraw Žižek from his communist position based on ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’ to redirect him to his own proposal in 1998 about ultrapolitics. On the other hand, I place Laclau’s and Mouffe’s analyses of political subjectivities on the same ground as Žižek’s ultrapolitics. I do this in order to accommodate the politics of survivors in terms of Žižek’s ‘ultrapolitics’. What I have acquired as a consequence is my way of interpreting Žižek’s ultrapolitics. Linking his ultrapolitics to the work of Laclau and Mouffe is one of the ways in which Žižek’s work can be placed in dialogue with the politics of survivors, ideology, and trauma. In other words, by assuming that Žižek has something more than he knows of himself, we can understand survivors in terms of Žižekian ultrapolitics.

To conclude this section, Žižek’s early works allow the thesis to formulate the two conceptual categories on trauma, namely ‘the Ideological-trauma’ and ‘the Real trauma’. The ideological trauma is a trauma that subjects are able to confront and accept. In part, it serves as a trauma that can sustain ideology and social fantasy. In contrast, the Real trauma is the trauma that the symbolic evades and it is the Real that comes back to overthrow the symbolic order. Throughout this thesis, I place the politics of survivors in the categorical standpoint of the Real-trauma because this category enables survivors to participate in political activism. In addition, my attempt is in part to provide a solution to Žižek’s emphasis on the proletariat while disdaining people burdened with trauma as incapable of participating in political resistance. By recalling his proposal about ultrapolitics, I suggest integrating this idea with Laclau’s and Mouffe’s ideas about political subjectivities. I suggest that this is a way to open a dialogue between Žižek and trauma research on the politics of survivors. I have also

borrowed the term political subjectivities from Laclau and Mouffe in order to grasp multiple agency in political antagonisms. There is a huge difference between the idea of ‘political subjectivities’ proposed by the two thinkers and my concern with ‘the subjectivity of survivor’ which to me needs to be examined in terms of desire and Lacanian psychoanalysis. The latter will be illustrated in the next section because it is a key term for understanding subjectivity in relation to the survivor’s political opposition throughout this thesis. In order to grasp this, the next section will discuss survivors in the context of Lacanian psychoanalysis and the concept of desire.

### **Psychoanalysing Trauma: Desire, the Other, *the object petit a*, and ‘the Subjectivity of Survivor’**

The aim of this section is to understand the subjectivity of survivors through Lacanian psychoanalysis. The section begins with Lacan’s teaching on the object of desire where he distinguishes between the fixing point of desire and the point where the desiring point is suspended by displaying the disparity between the Other and the other (*the object petit a*). Following this, I suggest that the difference between the Other and the other is important to doubt the testimony of survivor that survivors have used to declare their existence in the symbolic order and for political purposes. I also open a dialogue with Žižek’s post-traumatic subjectivity which, in my view, inhibits the possibility of thinking about traumatised persons such as survivors as agents of political activism.

To begin with, in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Lacan attempts to examine the tension of subject in the context of object of desire. Lacan carefully elaborates a difference between the Other and the other (*the object petit a*). The Other stands as a fantasy and Lacan points out that there is the need to the traverse that fantasy. The

traversal of fantasy urges the subject to connect with the place of desire that falls out of that fantasy. The Other which is a fantasy in Lacanian psychoanalysis is related to language, signifier, and demand.<sup>58</sup> As a fix and a quilting point of desire, the Other withstands itself as a fantasy, a signifier of desire which is unmovable, and in effect sets and demands itself as the object of desire without a lack. However, in urging us to traverse this fantasy, Lacan therefore coins the term *object petit a* to balance the Other as fantasy. Lacan describes *the object petit a* as “the circular movement of the thrust that emerges through the erogenous rim only to return to it as its target, after having encircling something.”<sup>59</sup> Lacan also continues that *the object petit a* is “a distance between the point at which the subject sees himself as lovable – and that other point where the subject sees himself caused by a lack by *a*.”<sup>60</sup>

From this definition, we can see that Lacan’s *object petit a* consists of two meanings. It means the substitution or the stand-in of desire on the one hand, and the lack of desire on the other. To follow Lacan’s analogy, *the object petit a* is a movement that comes back to its target, to disrupt the target and shows the symptom contained in the target. The meaning here is that *the object petit a* is something that covers the target momentarily. When *the object petit a* comes back, it in turn dissipates that target. This reflects the fact that the target is the point where desire is nothing, untruthful, and deceitful because that target remains a lack. The target, or the point where desire and the subject coexist, is no longer able to sustain itself after the intrusion of the movement which destabilises it. That movement is the force of *the object petit a*. In other words, this means that the desiring point or the Other can connect with subjects only momentarily. It serves as a stand-in only temporarily before that stand-in vanishes.

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<sup>58</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (New Jersey and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 13.

<sup>59</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 87.

<sup>60</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 90.

This leads to the following two options for the subjects when they confront the desiring point. First, to continue with that desiring point. If the subject makes this choice, the desiring point continues the fantasy. Second, to realise that the desiring point is constituted by a lack. If the subject makes this second choice, the subject will see himself at a distance from the object of desire which for the subject is the Other, or the fantasy. The subject sees his object of desire constituted by lack. Lacan urges the subject to go for the second option, that is to say, to break from the fantasy and to traverse it.

Alternatively, Elizabeth Cowie suggests that “*the object petit a* has a paradoxical role; it has a kind of borderline function that confounds any simple division of representation into a fixing and unfixing of the subject. This object both replaces – as a stand-in – and signifies lack.”<sup>61</sup> Todd McGowan’s interpretation of *object petit a* is also useful and should be quoted at some length:

Lacan invents the term ‘object petit a’ (and insists that it not be translated) in order to suggest this object’s irreducibility to the field of the big Other (*l’Autre*) or signification. In contrast to the social domain of the big Other that house our symbolic identities, it is a specific type of small other (*petit autre*) that is lost in the process of signification and ideological interpellation. The object petit a does not fit within the world of language or the field of representation. It is what the subject of language gives up in order to enter into language, though it does not exist prior to being lost.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Elizabeth Cowie, *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 123.

<sup>62</sup> Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan* (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), 6.



I suggest that it is possible to think of trauma as the Other and *the object petit a*. If trauma is considered as the Other, it will be something which can serve a political purpose. Given that the Other is pertinent in the fantasy-scenario, it produces consistency within the narrative of trauma. In contrast, if trauma is considered as *the object petit a*, it will be something that designates that trauma as the Other is a lack; not a consistency. To connect to what we have already discussed, trauma which is taken from *the object petit a* may suggest to us a more radical aspect of trauma. Meanwhile, the Other simply acts as a stand-in for a trauma. It is the gentle or decent image of trauma that prevents subjects from seeing the Real; the radical aspect of trauma. Lacan coins the term *the tuche* and defines it as “the Real that must be encountered.”<sup>63</sup> He continues that “the function of *the tuche*, of the Real as encounter – the encounter in so far as it may be missed, in so far as it is essentially the missed encounter, that of the trauma.”<sup>64</sup> From this perspective, trauma maybe something that the subjects fail to encounter. The trauma which is *the tuche*, the Real that must be encountered, seems to show its horror and terrifying image of shock differently from trauma as the Other, the stand-in image of trauma.

My adoption of a Lacanian notion of the Other, *the object petit a*, and the Real, leads not only to the two ways of thinking about trauma, but also to illustrate a viewpoint about the subjectivity of survivors in relation to politics and testimony. The subjectivity of survivors means the subjective formation of survivor that survivors intend to form their subjectivities, identities as victims; to make us perceive and understand them in the way that they want. In retrospect, from a Lacanian perspective, the subjectivity of survivors may enact a fantasy that makes us desire them in that way. The Lacanian perspective urges us to suspect that the subjectivity of the survivor is enacting itself as a fantasy, to make us to desire survivors in the way that they want. When survivors give testimony, is this testimony a fantasy, a stand-in

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<sup>63</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, 37, 55.

<sup>64</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, 55.

narrative that erases the Real scenario of trauma? When survivors give testimony, does the testimony that is now being used by survivors serve not only as a painful memory to condemn the government responsible for past killings, but also to construct their identities, only to make them register successfully in the symbolic order post-violence? When survivors give testimony, is this testimony that has been reduced to a tool to overthrow the government the Real? Hence, political movements that immerse testimony in ideological interpellations, undermine the credibility of the testimony itself. In this context, we must ask why such a testimony, a testimony that already destroyed its credibility, becomes the object of desire for us, the audience? The testimony may succeed in mobilising those who sympathise with survivors' stories politically but it does not succeed in completing a narrative of the trauma. When testimony is approached from a Lacanian perspective and understood as the Other, the result is that the testimony is only reduced to a stand-in narrative that structures our desire, and a medium we only have in our desires to know what trauma as the Real is. In short, testimony only plays an important role in becoming a substitute narrative for the unseen and unimaginable shocking image of trauma. It functions as *the object petit a* which informs us the incompleteness and the lack in every testimony of survivors in political action. Testimony is also important for survivors to register in the symbolic order, not only to construct their identities, but also to use it as a political strategy to overthrow the government responsible for the killings. To us, the listeners, we should depart from being subjectivised by that untruthful testimony and try to traverse this fantasy of testimony that structures our desire in these very problematical ways. The testimony is not truthful; it has a political agenda at its heart.

Lacan's notion of *object petit a* compels us to look beyond signification, that is to say, to assume the lack in the signifier. As May suggested, the *object petit a* urges us to perceive that there is an existential image of something that withdraws itself from the frame of language and representation. Through this Lacanian perspective, the testimony about violence

which survivors claim to be the Real is the signifier of lack. It is the lack, impossible to withhold the Real, because testimony is used and exploited by survivors for some particular reasons. My suggestion is that the testimony of survivors is used to construct identity and further the interests of political opposition. Testimony which is used for those objectives can violate the justice of the Real incident. Besides this, survivors involved in political activism, who use testimony for these purposes, cannot be condemned without sympathy as post-traumatic subjectivity. Because some traumatised persons continue their life as political activists, they cannot be judged without sympathy by Žižek as subjectivity at the zero-level; a form-of-life that is spending the rest of his/her life without significant content; and eventually a bare life.

Precisely, my consideration here is different from Žižek's view of post-traumatic subjectivity. Whereas Žižek's view of post-traumatic subjectivity, influenced in part by Catherine Malabou, seems to point out such subjectivity at the zero-level as the Real – life that language and social order cannot define, my assumption is different. My assumption is that survivors, who are traumatised persons, living within the symbolic order after violence are not supposed to be immediately defined as the Real. Their testimonies are also not the Real because testimonies are used to construct identities and mobilise politically. My assumption is that survivors continue to have a full status in the symbolic order through their political activities. Žižek tends to believe otherwise, however, asserting that traumatised persons are formless, speechless, and unable to act politically. He simply points out that post-traumatic subjectivity is a subjectivity deprived of his/her status within the social-symbolic register. After experiencing anarchy in real life, it is hard for the post-traumatic subjectivity to have emotional integrity compared with a time prior to the emergence of conflict. In Žižek's view:

A post-traumatic subject is thus a victim who, as it were, survives his or her own death. All different forms of traumatic encounters, independent of their specific nature (social, natural, biological, symbolic), lead to the same result: a new subject emerges which survives the death (erasure) of its symbolic identity...after the shock, literally a new subject emerges: a lack of emotional engagement, profound indifference, and detachment; this subject lives death as a form of life...This subject lives death as a form of life. The post-traumatic subject, the subject reduced to a substance-less empty form of subjectivity, is the historical 'realisation' of cogito – recall that the subject in a way neither 'is' nor thinks. This is why, when one submits a human subject to a traumatic intrusion, the outcome is the empty form of the 'living-death' subject: what remains after a violent traumatic intrusion (such as earthquake, genocide, and massacre) hits the human subject and which erases all its substantial content is the pure form of subjectivity, the form which already must have been there.<sup>65</sup>

It is apparent in this statement that post-traumatic subjectivity is a subjectivity that emerges after violence, a 'living death', and a naked subjectivity which is reduced to 'zero level'. For Žižek, this form of subjectivity is the Real, continuing outside the symbolic order, and no language and representation are capable of representing it. An excellent example of this subjectivity is Primo Levi. When Levi returned from Auschwitz, his neighbours in Poland would not be able to recognise his horrendous appearance, thus Levi after the fall of Nazi in World War II was the Real, or, a 'living death'. However, the thesis departs from this assumption. The thesis assumes that survivors are not a 'living death' in the way that Žižek denounces. Survivors register in the symbolic order and the factor that links survivors to the symbolic order is testimony. In concurrence with Lacan's *objet petit a*, the thesis assumes that testimony of trauma which survivors claim as the Real is in turn not the Real but a

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<sup>65</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Event: Philosophy in Transit* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 96-98.

structure of the object of desire. Because testimony is used to construct identity and mobilise politically, testimony is unreliable and hence does not constitute the Real. The testimony is simply an object of desire from the position of the Other. As a result, it is necessary to move away from Žižek's suggestion on a post-traumatic subjectivity because Žižek's argument is obscure as to how people with traumas constitute their own subjectivity and participate in political opposition.

In conclusion, the aim of this section has been to discuss the subjectivity of survivors. The subjectivity of the survivor is meaningful as subject formation arises from survivors' want of others to perceive survivors in the way they want. The factor that links survivors to us, to the symbolic order, is testimony. However, testimony is used by survivors for the purpose of identity construction and to mobilise politically. Those testimonies that survivors communicate and disseminate to us are seductive, but they are not the Real. At this point, the thesis introduces Lacan's teaching on the Other and *the object petit a*. The Other is the point where desire is sustained and unmoved while *the object petit a* is a movement that returns to disintegrate and suspend the fixing point of desire by moving it in another direction. This Lacanian concept is compatible with our discussion on the subjectivity of survivor because it gives a sense that the testimony of survivor is the Other, the quilting point of desire of testimony where listeners and speakers co-exist. The *object petit a* signals that the fixing point of desire is probably a trap, in effect, and listeners or subjects may wish to relegate the legitimacy of that testimony. At this point, subjects seek to separate themselves from the Other, which cannot stand in place of the Real. This point will be developed further in the next and final section of the chapter which deals with the symptom, the sinthome, death drive, and *jouissance*, the series of concepts that are essential for us to grasp the subjectivity of the survivor in the context of memory theory.

### **Presenting Trauma: Survivor, Symptom, Sinthome, Death Drive and *jouissance***

This section explores another two psychoanalytic terms in the work of Lacan, symptom and the sinthome. The two terms enable the thesis to grasp the subjectivity of the survivor in the context of political resistance. The survivors that the thesis is interested in are not depoliticised survivors. It might be said that survivors are not hastily defined as the post-traumatic subjectivities referred to in the last section. Survivors are not really post-traumatic subjectivities because they are not entirely detached from socio-symbolic orders. Rather, they might be considered as subjects enjoying their symptoms. The symptom is chosen to sustain symbolic meaning because it is better than having no social meaning. The symptom, in Žižek's paradigm, is a way for true enjoyment to get organised; the subject loves symptoms more than themselves.<sup>66</sup> It is true that it is impossible to trust every single word of the testimonies told by survivors. But what is more important is that if we believe this thesis, it will be said that survivors are enjoying their symptoms. Thus, so-called 'symptom-formation' leads to the formation of symbolic meanings, which ascertain a minimum guarantee of survivors' existence and their 'being-in-the world'.

This opposition to Žižek's post-traumatic subjectivity is the reason why we need to understand what Lacan means by the difference between symptom and the sinthome. Given that no society can exist without social meaning, there must be knowledge in charge of this symbolic space of meaning. In theory, a Lacanian symptom is a factor significant for creating social meaning in response to social demand. But the knowledge that the subjects get from the construction of social meaning is perhaps not truthful. This signals to subjects that they may eventually encounter the unreal effect of the social meaning, which is inadequate and flawed. That deceitful social meaning, however, must be maintained by

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<sup>66</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 80.

society in order to sustain symbolic order and to continue as basic knowledge for us. This is the fundamental meaning of a symptom in a Lacanian psychoanalysis.

The symbolic order is suspected of its capacity to withhold the trauma, the Real, and the unthinkable. The symbolic order denies the trauma. By organising subjects to live within a limited boundary of knowledge without facing trauma, the symbolic order is a lack. The symbolic order needs to carry itself forward, but the more it carries itself forward, the more it sustains reality by relying on fantasy. Subjects are also affected by this lack of social meaning, and subjects encounter nothing but a lack. Social meanings must be maintained in the society, otherwise the being of that society collapses. This is paradoxical because the social meaning that holds everything together, manipulating society to appear as an assemblage, is a symptom. This discussion is not new; it is compatible with the discussions in the second and third sections of this chapter, but it must be reiterated so as to make it connect to Lacan's concept of symptom.

Thus, briefly, a Lacanian symptom is a psychological factor making society sustainable and coherent. The symptom facilitates the symbolic order, which is a social fiction, while the Real signals that such social fiction is empty and vacant. Since its inception, it has been impossible to homogenise society. To some extent, Žižek's articulation of the symptom is legitimate to our discussion here:

Symptom is the way we-the subjects – 'avoid madness', the way we choose something (the symptom-formation) instead of nothing (radical psychotic autism, the destruction of the

symbolic universe) through the binding of our enjoyment to a certain signifying, symbolic formation which assures a minimum of consistency to our being-in-the-world.<sup>67</sup>

To reiterate, the symptom is the pathology of knowledge determined by the society to assure our symbolic place in the world. Symptom is the term Lacan introduces in 1960 to refer to the idealising symbolic meaning. Alongside this, Lacan's early work also sought to condemn the impossible universalization of any knowledge claimed by the subjects. From 1970 onwards, however, in work that is often termed 'the late Lacan', he invents another significant term, 'the sinthome'. The sinthome is a concept Lacan introduces in a seminar called RSI in 1975. In my analysis, the early Lacan was driven by an interest in the problem of language. Indeed, the early Lacan reveals the weakness of the linguistic system, including indicating that the empty form of knowledge and the untenable ideology sustain a symbolic order, and it should be no surprise that Žižek's critique of ideology is greatly inspired by the works of early Lacan. This early work of Lacan enables the thesis to problematize the testimony of survivors, in a practical manner, because testimony is generally expressed through language. It is also a useful tool through which the thesis can identify the problem of the government's construction of official memory with regards to violence and war.

By way of contrast, the late Lacan offers an intense discussion of problem of subjectivity in relation to death drive and *jouissance*. Also, by the late 1970s, Lacan's work contains a very complex discussion on the dimension of subjectivity, especially the subject's identification with enjoyment beyond Law. The late Lacan produced a significant concept to read subjectivity in the context of enjoyment, death drive, and life beyond the boundary of

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<sup>67</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 81.



language. Those concepts are more inspiring than his description of the alienation of the subject through concepts such as ‘the mirror stage’ in the 1950s. While Lacan’s early work is useful for us to address problems of language, testimony, conscious and unconscious, Lacan’s work in the late 1970s will be useful to address the survivor’s subjectivity in relation to *jouissance* and the death drive. Hence, in order to access thoroughly the politics of survivors, the thesis will address the works of both early and late Lacan without necessarily making a clear distinction between the periods.

To begin with, the *sinthome* (which is different from the symptom) is a fourth analytic category in addition to the Symbolic, the Real, and the Imaginary.<sup>68</sup> The *sinthome* is a meaning that is neither the symbolic order nor the Real; it mostly remains consonant with the imaginary. In other words, the *sinthome* is a particular existence of the subject which is not registered by the symbolic order. It is also predominantly noted as a particular mode of existence of the subject which is not the Real. To explain further, it is the imaginary that is not translated directly into the symbolic order because the *sinthome* is the particular universe inherent in the subject that circulates only within the subject. It is also the imaginary which is not the Real because the Real of subjectivity has a much wider dimension than the *sinthome*. For instance, if the unconscious is defined as one of the boundaries of the Real, the *sinthome* is not necessarily the unconscious; therefore, the *sinthome* is not purely the Real. Thus, the precise meaning of the *sinthome* is a particular universe inherent in the subject that only circulates within the subject; the image of self-manifestation which is neither translated into the symbolic order nor is immediately understood as the Real. This explains why the *sinthome* is another mode of existence of the subject, or, to follow Andreja Zevnik’s summary, the *sinthome* is “the alternative ordering principle” of existence.<sup>69</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>68</sup> James Mellard, *Beyond Lacan* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), 36.

<sup>69</sup> Andreja Zevnik, *Lacan, Deleuze and World Politics: Rethinking the ontology of the political subject* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 15.

James Mellard explains that the sinthome is “the imaginary that is contrary to symbolic, complementary to sinthome, and contradictory to the Real.”<sup>70</sup>

The sinthome is the psychoanalytic character that is retroactively opposed to the symptom that stands in place of the desire of the Other, enacting itself as fantasy element affecting subjects.<sup>71</sup> Although it is the existence of the subject that ceases to cooperate with the desire of the Other, the sinthome is a negation of identity configuration and places itself beyond any possibility to signify itself. Lacan suggests that if there is any kind of subjectivity which places itself beyond signification, following an opposition to the desire of the Other, subjectivity will be the death drive.<sup>72</sup> Death drive is the particular existence of the subject that has no clear form in the symbolic order. In front of the social norm, death drive remains opaque. Death drive is a circularity of living force which is entrenched in the subject in a form of pure enjoyment.<sup>73</sup> In this sense, it is equated with the sinthome and is a pure *jouissance*. For the precise meaning of *jouissance*, it is enjoyment that transcends what is defined in Law. It is the paradox of enjoyment that subjects derive pleasure and pain at the same time; it is the anomic satisfaction that the subjects eventually derive all of a sudden with suffering.<sup>74</sup> With traumas, the subjects are able to identify in favour of unusual enjoyments beyond social comprehension, outside social norms and that is how *jouissance* emerges. This process only occurs following the traversal of fantasy because there will be no sinthome if the subjects continue to identify with the desire of the Other which is the symptom. At this point, Philip Derbyshire explains the difference between symptom and the sinthome as follows:

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<sup>70</sup> Mellard, *Beyond Lacan*, 40-41.

<sup>71</sup> Ruti, *The Singularity of Being*, 115.

<sup>72</sup> Jacques Lacan, *RSI* (Unpublished, 1975), 25.

<sup>73</sup> Elizabeth Stewart, *Catastrophe and Survival: Walter Benjamin and Psychoanalysis* (London: Continuum Books, 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 93.

The difference between symptom and sinthome could thus be characterized as the difference between a substitutive satisfaction whose meaning lies in its address to the Other in the field of the Other (the symptom as signifying), and a ‘suppletive’ artifice which works directly on *jouissance* (the sinthome). For Lacan, this artifice of the sinthome which lies beyond fantasy points towards the singularity of the subject; a subject which knows itself to be the cause of things – to be responsible.<sup>75</sup>

To follow Derbyshire’s insight, the difference between symptom and sinthome is that the former claims itself as equilibrium satisfaction, to stand in place where the subject’s satisfaction is perceived in full, that is, to stand in as a fantasy. Meanwhile, the sinthome indicates that the symptom is only a substitutive satisfaction the meaning of which is placed in the field of fantasy, and, in effect, urges the subject to transcend this fantasy. The subject which traverses fantasy is the subject that realises itself ‘as a cause of thing, to be responsible’ as the subject pointing towards consistency in itself.<sup>76</sup> After the traversal of fantasy, the subjects which are the sinthome are the subjects whose particular universe only retains in them and in particular are the subjects that do not register in the symbolic order. The subjects who possess the death drive and *jouissance* reflect a consistency that subjects maintain the death drive in favour of their *jouissance*.

To meet the point suggested earlier, possessing the death drive in pursuit of *jouissance* is not immediately the Real but is just a half-truth of the Real for the subject. Death drive is not an agential force of life that signals that subjects are moving towards nothing. Rather, death drive means that subjects realise the value in life in the pursuit of any activities that might lead them towards death.<sup>77</sup> They obtain *jouissance* in the pursuit of such

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<sup>75</sup> Philip Derbyshire, “Lacan and Ethics,” in *Origins and Ends of the Mind: Philosophical Essays on Psychoanalysis*, ed. Christian Kerslake et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 95.

<sup>76</sup> Ellie Ragland, *Essays on the Pleasures of Death: From Freud to Lacan* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 97.

<sup>77</sup> Ragland, *Essays on the Pleasures of Death*, 87.

quality of life which is driven by death under the condition of obtaining *jouissance*. This is an alternative mode of existence, in respect to the consistency of the choice the subjects make. Thus, it can be said that the uptake of the consistency of something is likely to illustrate the subjects' possession of death drive in the pursuit of their *jouissance*.

Why are these psychoanalytic concepts of symptom and the sinthome valuable for the politics of survivors? There are two ways in which the symptom will thematically contribute to the thesis. First, the symptom, the concept we derive from the early Lacan, is useful for the thesis because it assists in the task of critiquing ideology. Ideology, or that which the thesis has described as an Ideological-trauma, is the symptom. This official memory stands in place of the fantasy as the basis of knowledge and social consistency. Ideology as the symptom is the critical point which politically active survivors have unmasked when they have critiqued the official memory sustained by the government in order to transcend this fantasy. There is another crucial aspect that the Lacanian symptom illuminates about the politics of survivors. The symptom helps us to understand the way that survivors' testimonies are possibly a fantasy and that testimony is only used for identity construction and political mobilisation. Thus, as argued in the previous section, the testimony of the survivor that omits the Real is incomplete knowledge, and this is the emergence of a symptom. Although it can be said that the testimony of survivor signals collective memory, this collective memory is not the truth of the violence. Maurice Halbwachs suggests that collective memory is the act of recollecting memories through mutual cooperation with the objective of forming frameworks of memory in relation to certain events that occurred in the past.<sup>78</sup> But, if we introduce Lacan's symptom into this memory theory, it can be said that the act of recalling memory may be a symptom. It is a symptom in the sense that it forms knowledge of the impossibility, but it turns out to be

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<sup>78</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. trans. Lewis Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38.

the only knowledge available for those outside the violence to serve as the truth of the violence.

There are two ways in which the concept of the *sinthome* will contribute to the thesis. First, this late Lacanian concept is useful for understanding the subjectivity of the survivor. In particular, for the subjectivity of political activist survivors resisting governments, even confronting violence imposed by the government, the concept of *sinthome* leads us to assume that those survivors possessing death drive and *jouissance*. In the face of possible death through political conflict with the government, the political activist survivors are full of enjoyment even in a situation when they are placed to face death, and this category of enjoyment is beyond social comprehension. This probably reflects the subjectivity of survivors who dedicate their life as political activists rather than survivors who prefer to remain isolated from and refuse to talk about the past. There is another area in which the *sinthome* is significant to the thesis. The testimony of the survivor in the service of identity construction and political opposition illustrates another image of *jouissance* and death drive. In this sense, testimony produces *jouissance*. Those survivors whose testimonies and artworks reflect their *jouissance* do not simply trigger a depressive experience. Acts of recalling memory have a political and social agenda that permeates every aspect of the acts.

In conclusion, the aim of this section has been to argue that there is a difference between thinking about survivors in terms of post-traumatic subjectivity and survivor in terms of political activism. In other words, it is a difference between survivors who are incapable of politics and survivors who are respected as political participants in the course of political resistance. This argument directed us to elaborate the difference between symptom and the *sinthome*, and I demonstrated that these two terms are useful for the thesis in different ways. While symptom urges us to transcend the fantasy, which is an imaginary constructed either by the government or of the testimony of survivor, the *sinthome* invites us to look at

the subjectivity of the survivor in the contexts of *jouissance* and death drive. The two are psychological factors that preside over the political activist survivors in their struggle against the existing government.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter proposes a theory of the politics of survivors by drawing insights from four resources, namely: the critique of ideology; Lacanian psychoanalysis; memory theory; and trauma theories. In consequence, there are four points of consideration. First, our discussion of *the positioning of trauma* explores a psychoanalytical concept by arguing that it is either through the conscious and the unconscious that trauma is communicated, albeit with different results and with different reliability. The communication of trauma from the conscious such as in memoirs, novels, artefacts etc. can appear unnatural as it appears a calculation on the part of sufferers to decide which memories they wish to express and which they wish not to express. In contrast, the unconscious reflection of trauma in the form of slips of the tongue and the pen is more spontaneous and hence appears natural. The reflection of trauma in different forms creates possible arguments about different types of subjectivity, and from a Lacanian perspective, it encourages us to think about split subjectivity. Despite the value of a discussion about the relation between trauma and the split subjectivity for in-depth thought about the expression of trauma, the thesis finds necessary to extend the debate in order to highlight the imperative of the survivor's memory as one of the radical movements and as an opposition to the symbolic representation in which the official memory is at stake.

Second, *the politicising of trauma* follows Žižek's discussion of trauma by pointing out that official memories can be referred to as the Ideological-trauma, as they instrumentalise trauma for the goals of national solidarity, identity construction, and

enjoyment. Following Žižek's suggestion that the Real is what causes a gap within the symbolic order and enables the symbolic order to disclose ontological disparity, the thesis coins another term, the Real-trauma, to indicate the Real as something which can undo the appearance of the symbolic-order. An example of this is the survivor's use of testimony as the resisting force of memory that produces a crack in the Ideological-trauma, including the symbolic order and official memory. The existence and prevalence of the Real-trauma enables a break and an interruption of the official memory. This means that what is underscored in the Ideological-trauma is less a completion of it than a contentious force menacing its institutionalised formation, which can lead to symbolic repercussions and interruptions.

Third, *the psychoanalysing of trauma* argues that the survivor's memory is considered the Real object of desire as the lost but the recoverable object of desire in contrast to the official memory that subjects often confuse as the object of desire of the Real. It argues that because of the fantasy-effect embodied in the official memory, the subjects continue their desires with the official memory. The object of desire consists of the fantasy-effect in which the subjects fails to realise the fantasy-effect embodied in the object of desire is the desire of the Other and the official memory is one of those objects of desire. In contrast, the survivor's memory is understood as the lost but recoverable object of desire that Lacan terms *the object petit a*. In this context, the survivor's testimony is used in the service of identity construction and political mobilisation, to maintain desire in order to assure their identities in the symbolic order.

Fourth, *the presenting trauma* discusses the survivor's memory in relation to the symptom, sinthome, death drive and *the jouissance*. Although at the expense of reiterating trauma, it argues that testimony allows survivors to obtain pleasure alongside a painful feeling, and this makes them reach *jouissance*, that is, to attain a pain-in-pleasure. It is only

insofar as the survivor's memory dissolves the official memory, at the expense of reiterating an agony-memory, that survivors attain surplus enjoyment, or *jouissance*. Even though the survivors' memory and testimony are constituted as symptoms, they are reiterated by survivors in the pursuit of *jouissance* because only in doing so can they destabilise official memory. Another aspect of the sinthome is the death drive. Their activities in pursuit of overthrowing the government means that they risk facing death, but survivors are ready to embrace this because their political activities are driven by the unfear of death.

In the next chapter, the thesis will present the first scenario of the politics of survivors. The case of Vietnam will be the first case that tests the practicality and effectivity of the theory of the politics of survivors that this chapter has elucidated at length.



## **Chapter Two**

### **The Politics of the Vietnam War Survivors: Acting from the Diasporas via the Art Productions**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter argues that Vietnam War survivors play a key role in contemporary Vietnamese politics, in particular due to their ambitions to overthrow the Communist Party of Vietnam (CVP). Since the Fall of Saigon in 1975, Vietnam has been ruled under the prerogative authority of the CVP, which in compatibility with the country's state apparatus, has led to a history of political suppression. Corresponding specifically to 'Asian Values', a belief in strict hierarchical order that enables the government to act as a spiritual leader, which increases the legitimacy of the CVP and allows it to impose the official memory of the Vietnam War. By establishing another account, in contrast to this singular, official memory, this chapter seeks to represent the alterity of thought among survivors. Those Vietnam War survivors, most of them resettled overseas, have continuously sought to retrieve their memories in conjunction with their political movements to mobilise others to collectively undermine the credibility of the CVP. Furthermore, the chapter shows how artworks are mediums of the subjectivity of survivors by raising some useful examples of three survivors' artworks and by demonstrating the significant dimension of the artworks as mirrors of survivors' painful memories of the Vietnam War. It shows how painful memories are imprinted in the artwork and the artwork reflects childhood memory and are symbolic of the painful memories that constitute survivors' subjectivities.

I will develop the main argument of this chapter in four parts. The first part examines contemporary Vietnam, with an emphasis on the authority of the CVP to form official memory that remains uneasy to challenge. The second part of the chapter focuses on the testimonies of some prominent Vietnam War survivors in order to illustrate the implications of the use of memory in relation to the political movement against the communist government. The third part focuses on the artworks of Vietnam War survivors, arguing that art serves as a crucial medium for survivors' subjectivities and their remembrance of the war. The fourth part seeks to combine essential arguments derived from the three previous sections in overall reflection on the issues from Lacanian and Žižekian perspectives. The two perspectives help in several ways: enabling us to articulate the impossibility of having authoritative memory of the Vietnam War; helping us to understand painful memory in relation to the conscious and the unconscious; locating painful memory or trauma as something that eventually becomes the object of desire; and retelling a painful memory as a form of political opposition as for the declaration of survivor's social existence is where the survivors find *jouissance*.

### **The Contemporary Context of Vietnam Politics: Forming Official Memory**

This section explores the contemporary political context of Vietnam in which the national administration under the control of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CVP) produces and maintains official memory of the Vietnam War. I argue that the official memory of the Vietnam War is formed in part through the belief in Asian Values, in which the ruler orders and the ruled only follows, which has the effect of tightening political and social control under the state apparatus. This is the context in which survivors have challenged the official narrative and

sought to establish an alternative memory of the Vietnam War. By making use of memory, they have sought not only to challenge the official memory, but also to legitimise a transition from one-party to multi-party rule, or in other words: uprooting the current authoritarian system and replacing it with democracy.

The Communist Party of Vietnam (CVP) has ruled the reunified Vietnam since the ‘civil war’, often been referred to in Anglo-Saxon academic literature as the ‘Vietnam War’, which ended in May 1975. Carlyle Thayer explains that “the party exercises hegemonic control over state institutions, the armed forces and other organisations in society through the penetration of these institutions by party members, cells and committees”<sup>1</sup>, of which such state apparatus is designed to govern the entire affairs of the country, which operates vertically from the urban to the rural areas and is monitored by the CVP.<sup>2</sup> The reality of Vietnamese government is underscored by its political philosophy: that of the one-party state. The authoritarian rule of the CVP is sustained by the state apparatus with its repressive action against pro-democracy activists and civil society organisations,<sup>3</sup> including any anti-communist political organisations.

The belief in Asian Values<sup>4</sup> makes Vietnam not so very different from other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Ruling country in a hierarchical fashion is achieved by means of

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<sup>1</sup> Carlyle Thayer, “One Party Rule and the Challenge of Civil Society in Vietnam”, Presentation to Remaking the Vietnamese State: Implications for Vietnam and the Region Vietnam Workshop, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, August 21-22, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan London, *Politics in Contemporary Vietnam: Party, State, and Authority Relations* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Carlyle Thayer and David Marr, *Vietnam and the Rule of Law* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1993). Benedict Kerkvliet, Nguyen Quang Tria, and Bach Tan Sinh, *Forms of Engagement Between State Agencies and Civil Society Organisations in Vietnam* (Hanoi: NGO Resource Centres, 2008). Andrew Wells-Dang, *Civil Society Networks in China and Vietnam: Informal Pathbreakers in Health and Environment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Andrew Wells-Dang, *Civil Society and Climate Change in Vietnam: Actors, Roles and Possibilities* (Hanoi: Pact Vietnam, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Gabi Waibel, Judith Ehlert, and Hart Feuer, *Southeast Asia and the Civil Society Gaze: Scoping a contested concept in Cambodia and Vietnam*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 10.

tightening one party's political power while curbing social and political pluralism.<sup>5</sup> This strict hierarchy is the essence of 'Asian Values', and has become dominant in many Asian countries.<sup>6</sup> Despite the government of Vietnam promising to introduce democracy to the country, such as in 1998 when the party attempted to carry out political reform through what is known as 'grassroots democracy', observers have noted that Vietnamese leaders have framed the concept of democracy in the elitist fashion of the Asian way of democracy, which has been thematised in the West as the 'Asian values'.<sup>7</sup>

In the past, the CVP led anti-colonial wars against France and the US, which gives it enormous authority to request the Vietnamese people give them a popular support. The aging party leadership remains profoundly influenced by the memory of war and continue to believe that it is the duty of the Vietnamese people to support them because of its leadership role in anti-colonial struggles.<sup>8</sup> The possession of and obsession with the memory of war among senior party leaders has led to the formation of what this thesis calls 'the official memory'. That is, "the writing of the past as a narrative of heroic and ultimately triumphant struggle against foreign domination and inscribing the future as a vision of communist utopia".<sup>9</sup> As Zachary Abuza suggests: "the leadership's worldview was shaped by thirty years of anticolonial struggle and ten more years of conflict with China and its surrogate, the Cambodian Khmer Rouge",<sup>10</sup> which can be interpreted as an argument that the state-sanctioned meta-narrative of the official memory is

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<sup>5</sup> International Business Publication, "Vietnam Electoral, Political Parties Laws, and Regulations Handbook," (Washington: 2015), 237. To Xuan Phuc, "Legal rights to resources in Vietnamese uplands," in *State, Society, and the Market in Contemporary Vietnam: Property, Power, and Values*, ed. Hue-Tam Ho Tai et al. (London and New York: 2013), 82.

<sup>6</sup> John Gillespie and Albert Chen, *Legal Reforms in China and Vietnam: A Comparison of Asian Communist Regimes* (Oxon and New York: 2010), 27-28.

<sup>7</sup> Zachary Abuza, *Renovating Politics in Contemporary Vietnam* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. :2001), 22.

<sup>8</sup> Abuza, *Renovating Politics in Contemporary Vietnam*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Abuza, *Renovating Politics in Contemporary Vietnam*, 4.

formed by a colonial and an anti-colonial memory, including the revolutionary struggle against the US, which party leaders consider a victorious memory. The imposition of official memory correlates with the political culture in Vietnam and other Asian countries in which the rulers order and the ruled simply follow. From the CVP's perspective, this uncompromising stance not only hinders negotiations for Vietnamese democracy, but also denies the possibility for citizens to renounce state-based official memory. More importantly, renunciation of the state-based official memory is made difficult by the dissemination of the official memory throughout a country by the state education system.<sup>11</sup>

In brief, the CVP has been ruling the country as a single-party state since the Fall of Saigon in 1975. This political control is concurrent with the belief in Asian Values, a set of idea that only empowers the ruler, and which will be leading to a total state control under the state apparatus. This makes it very easy for the official memory of the war to be replicated and reproduced from the perspective of the government. It must be noted that there are attempts from overseas Vietnamese organisations formed by the Vietnamese diaspora (*Viet Kieu*) that aim to overthrow the Vietnamese government. Most are anti-communist political groups led by Vietnam War survivors, such as Hoang Co Minh (a founder of the Vietnam Reform Party, Viet Tan) from the US, Vo Dai Ton (an important figure of Alliance for the Restoration of Vietnam Greencare) from Australia<sup>12</sup>, and Le Quoc Tuy<sup>13</sup> from France. These overseas political organisations are political partners, and have been led by survivors who have sided with anti-government factions. How survivors who have become high-ranking officials in those

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<sup>11</sup> Alex Joseph "Teaching The War: What the Vietnamese Government Wants Students to Learn About the American-Vietnam War", World Learning, SIT Study Abroad, Vietnam: Culture and Development, Fall, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Justin Corfield, *The History of Vietnam* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 111.

<sup>13</sup> David Lan Pham, *Two Hamlets in Nam Bo: Memoirs of Life in Vietnam Through Japanese Occupations, the French and American Wars, and Communist Rule, 1940-1986* (North Carolina McFarland & Company, Inc.: 2008), 229-230.

organisations have played a prominent role in trying to overthrow the Vietnamese government is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

### **The Use of Memory: Recalling the Past Politically in the Present**

The objective of this section is to reply to the first research question of the thesis outlined in the introductory chapter. The first research question asks that given the interface between a trauma and the influence of a painful memory in the aftermath of violence, what is the role of the survivor in the political movement against the government in the time of the present? To respond to this question, we will focus on this matter from the anti-communist survivor's perspective. We will see how prominent survivors have played a leading role by forming organisations with the political objective of challenging the communist government in Hanoi. We will see how they have used their painful memories as important parts of their political movements. In other words, recalling painful memories from before the end of the Vietnam War is crucial for their current political movements. We will see how survivors could ultimately share the collective memory of the war, and how the collective memory of the war stands in opposition to the official memory of the war propagandised by the Vietnamese government.

To begin with, the official memory of the Vietnam War is that of the success of a small nation in expelling western colonialists.<sup>14</sup> Nguyen Dang Phat has suggested that the war is bound up with national identity, as at the end of the war, "all the roads were flooded by people holding flags. There were no bombs or airplane sounds or screaming. The happy moment was

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<sup>14</sup> Ho Tai, *The Country of Memory*, 4.

indescribable”.<sup>15</sup> The official memory is rooted in the belief in Asian values, whilst antagonism towards it corresponds with Viet Thanh Nguyen’s profound reflections on the memory of war. He asks “inseparable from this grim and mournful history are more complicated questions, how do we remember the living and what they did during times of war? how do we remember war itself, both war in general and the particular war that has shaped us? The problem of how to remember war is central to the identity of the nation, itself almost always founded on the violent conquest of territory and the subjugation of people”.<sup>16</sup> Remembering war is unquestionably an activity that is crucial for the formation of national identity, but such activity should not be controlled by a dominant group, party, or the state apparatus. In order for this to happen, however, there must be political and social activity through which the voice of the dominant group is assuaged and prepared for multiple voices, differentiations, negotiations to emerge. Accepting the impossibility of a consensual bloc is fundamental to the practice of resisting the dominant paradigm.

The communist party has been ruling the country in a draconian manner since 1975. Vietnam War survivors whose viewpoints diverge from those of the communist party have responded by forming political organisations, recruiting supporters throughout Vietnam and Vietnamese communities overseas to stop the domination of the communist party and to propel the country towards democracy. In fact, there are several prominent organisations that have been established by Vietnam War survivors with the political principle aim of overthrowing communism in Vietnam. Examples of anti-communist organisations within Vietnam and among the diaspora include: Alliance for Democracy; Assembly of Vietnamese Democrats; Association

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<sup>15</sup> The Atlantic “The Vietnam War, as Seen by the Victors,” The Atlantic, Accessed May 28, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/the-vietnam-war-as-seen-by-the-north-vietnamese/390627>

<sup>16</sup> Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 3.

of former Political Prisoners; Center for Human Rights in Vietnam; Committee to Protect Vietnamese Workers; Federation of Free Vietnamese Labour; The Federation of Technical Strategic Directorate Associations; For the Vietnamese People Party; International Institute for Vietnam; The People's Force to Save Vietnam; National Resurgence Force; National Congress of Vietnamese Americans; Overseas Vietnamese Laity Movement; The People's Democratic Party of Vietnam; The Rally for Democracy; The United Workers and Farmers Organisation of Vietnam; Viet Tan Revolutionary Party; Vietnam Human Rights Network; Twenty-First Century Democracy Party; Vietnam Nationalist Party (Central Coordinating Council of Overseas Chapters); Vietnamese Community of Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia; National Salvation Committee; People's Democratic Party of Vietnam; Vietnam Progress Party; Bloc 8406; United Workers-Farmers Association; and Vietnamese Women for Human Rights.<sup>17</sup>

Given the scope of this thesis, it is impossible for this chapter to cover over all of those organisations. Therefore, it is important to highlight some key organisations that shed light on the thesis's research questions. To recapitulate, one of the key research questions is *to ask* how and in what way survivors of the violent incidents play a prominent role in contemporary politics with the particular aim of overthrowing the current government. The thesis *hypothesises the*

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<sup>17</sup> Although most of the political organisations in Vietnam operated by survivors living in exile, have tendency to promote democracy in a country, this is not consistently meant that there will be no other political organisations that aim to replace the communist rule by other ideologies. In fact, there are other exceptional organisations that form by survivors which aim to promote political ideology such as constitutional monarchy, rights of the minorities, and religious rights in different matters to the three anti-communism organisations that the thesis mentioned above. For instance, the Vietnamese Constitutional Monarchist League directed by Nguyen Phuc Buu Chanh, a Vietnam War survivor, aims to replace communist government with a constitutional monarchy. Montagnard Foundation formed by an exile Vietnamese aims to promote human rights value to the indigenous people living in central highlands of Vietnam. Unified Buddhist Sanga of Vietnam, a Buddhist organisation, which is banned in Vietnam while the government is looking to promote Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam. The founder of the Unified Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam is Thich Quang Do, a priest who endured torture under Ngo Dinh Diem government; Do is the Vietnam War survivor and a former prisoner at the Phan Dang Luu re-education camp. In addition, there is the Democratic Party of Vietnam, a political organisation formed by Hoang Minh Chinh, a Vietnam War survivor. Chinh had been served in many prestigious governmental positions and becomes an anti-communist figure after being arrested and put to jails by his own communist comrades several times. This case offers a significant insight to the thesis to aware of the fact that it is likely possible that people or the war survivors, who had served in the governmental position in the past, can change their minds and, in turn, form political organisations against the government.



answer that survivors have used painful memories forged during atrocities as the essential dimension of a political movement to undermine the credibility and reputation of the current regime. The four case studies will hopefully stand to convey such an answer. This section of the chapter concerning the case of Vietnam will be the first case study to test this hypothesis.

There are three prominent organisations formed outside of Vietnam that were founded by Vietnam War survivors and, in my judgment, can help to answer the research question outlined earlier. The three organisations under consideration in what follows are: Vietnam Reform Party (Viet Tan); Vietnam Reform Party; and Bloc 8406. These organisations have been selected for discussion because: (a) the organisations are in alliance with each other; (b) the organisations have a shared common principle of struggling against the communist party; (c) the leading members of the organisations have a shared collective memory in contradistinction to the official memory; (d) the organisations are internationally recognised across Europe and North America; and (e) leading members of the organisations are well known and their names are prominent in western media.

To begin with, the first organisation we will discuss is the Vietnam Reform Party or Viet Tan. Viet Tan is an anti-communist organisation based in the US, and its director is Do Hoang Diem, a Vietnam War survivor who migrated to the US after the Fall of Saigon in 1975. The organisation endeavours to transform Vietnam by advocating a transition to democracy in the country. This strategy corresponds to Vietnam Social Sciences' conclusion in 1996 that "democratisation must be closely linked to the raising of the level of education for the people and the sense of citizenship for cadres and people".<sup>18</sup> Viet Tan has adopted these following key strategies: (a) to spread democratic ideas, and encourage a pluralistic society, and a multiparty

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<sup>18</sup> Committee for Social Sciences, *Vietnam Social Sciences*, 51-56 (1996): 42.

system; (b) to end all racial discrimination against ethnic minorities in Vietnam; (c) to have develop relations with pro-democracy organisation in Eastern Europe; (d) to reconsider unjust treaties signed between the communist government of Vietnam and foreign countries or firms.<sup>19</sup>

One of the core components of Viet Tan's political strategies is to increase a number of active citizenships and grassroots movements by providing training and capacity building for local people and to engage international advocacy by asking for collective action to put a pressure on the Vietnamese government.<sup>20</sup>

Viet Tan has declared that its fundamental political principle is to promote democracy in Vietnam through the use of the non-violent means. Nonetheless, state-operated media in Hanoi has depicted it as a terrorist organisation. The founding father of Viet Tan was Hoang Co Minh, a former Republic of Vietnam Navy Admiral. Minh founded the National United Front for Liberation of Vietnam (NUFLV) on April 30<sup>th</sup> 1980. He later established the Viet Tan on September 10<sup>th</sup> 1982. Both the NUFLV and the Viet Tan have been accused of aiming to overthrow the communist government through violent means since the middle of the Vietnam War.<sup>21</sup> On September 19<sup>th</sup> 2004, leaders of the Viet Tan released a program that stressed that only peaceful means will be exerted to achieve democracy in Vietnam in cooperation with other like-minded groups. Since 2004, Viet Tan has become active in lobbying members of parliament in Australia and Europe as well as congressmen in the US. For instance, during the final quarter of 2006, members of Viet Tan in the US actively lobbied the Bush administration to raise human

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<sup>19</sup> Pham Huy Trung, "U.S.-Vietnam Security Relations Since Normalization", M.A. Dissertation Submission to American University Washington D.C. (2009), 43. International Business Publication, "Vietnam Electoral, Political Parties Laws, and Regulations Handbook," 53. Ramses Amer, Ashok Swain, and Joakim Öjendal, *The Security-Development Nexus: Peace, Conflict and Development*, London: New York: Delhi, 2013), 174. Sandra Kurfürst, *Redefining public space in Hanoi: Places, practice, and meaning* (Munster and Zurich, 2011), 46.

<sup>20</sup> Ian Jeffries, *Contemporary Vietnam: A Guide to Economic and Political Developments* (London and New York Routledge, 2011), 29.

<sup>21</sup> Tatjana Bauer, *The Challenge of Knowledge Sharing: Practices of the Vietnamese Science Community* in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), 85.

rights issues at the APEC Summit in Hanoi in November. Viet Tan also lobbied international donors to link transparency and accountability with their aid programs in Vietnam. In March 2007, Viet Tan organised international rallies to protest against the wave of political repression underway in Vietnam. Forming the Viet Tan as an anti-communist group overseas has resulted in the provision of training, funds, and other resources for civil society groups within Vietnam.<sup>22</sup>

It is not a surprise that the communist regime in Hanoi has responds negatively to the emergence of Viet Tan.<sup>23</sup> However, our interest in the politics of Vietnam War survivors is to examine how survivors recall the past and use it against communists in the present. This point is displayed in the testimony of Do Hoang Diem, current director of Viet Tan. Diem stresses that:

April 30<sup>th</sup> marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. We must examine how 40 years of communist rule has affected the people of Vietnam. Since 1975, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) established one of the most repressive and corrupt regimes in our history. Immediately after taking control of South Vietnam, the CPV sent hundreds of thousands of people into prison camps where thousands died from torturing, starvation, diseases and exhaustion from extreme labour.<sup>24</sup>

By discrediting the legitimacy of the communist regime in Hanoi, Diem's testimony links the human rights situation in Vietnam with memory as part of his political movement to promote

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<sup>22</sup> Carlyle Thayer, "Vietnam and the Challenge of Political Civil Society," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 31 (1) (2009): 17.

<sup>23</sup> Sandra Kurfürst, *Redefining Public Space in Hanoi: Places, Practices, and Meaning* (Lit Verlag: Berlin and Zurich, 2012), 46.

<sup>24</sup> Viet Tan, "Testimony Regarding Human Rights Situation in Vietnam in Canada's House of Commons," *Viet Tan*, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.viettan.org/Testimony-Regarding-the-Human.html>.

democracy in Vietnam. This suggests that Diem's testimony coincides well with our assumption that the painful memories of survivors of the war are used to undermine the political legitimacy of the communist regime in Hanoi. Painful memories of the Vietnam War are recalled through such of his expressions as 'April 30<sup>th</sup> marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War', 'We must examine how 40 years of communist rule has affected the people of Vietnam', and 'the CPV sent hundreds of thousands of people into prison camps where thousands died from torturing, starvation, diseases and exhaustion from extreme labour'. Diem's testimony represents a recall of the memory by the survivor and the use of memory to reveal the communists' wrongful actions during the Vietnam War. To some extent, these expressions reflect memories of the Vietnam War that are excluded from the official memory. Diem's testimony, coupled with his use of his painful memory to challenge the government, puts him clearly in the category of anti-official memory.

It is evident that since 2006, pro-democracy organisations initiated by Vietnam War survivors at home and abroad have formed a network that links them to each other in terms of a shared ideology.<sup>25</sup> In retrospect, the collective aim of survivors and these established organisations is to positively democratise Vietnam, to devise a strategy and constructively engage in freeing people, to defend the legitimate territory of Vietnam from the influence of foreign invaders (e.g. China), and to promote the principle of the freedom of speech. The strategy is not confined simply to overthrowing an undemocratic government using violent acts but seeks to substantially impact on homeland politics by preparing a democratising platform for the country and by collecting support from anti-communist organisations operating in homeland

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<sup>25</sup> Carlyle Thayer, "Vietnam: The Tenth Party Congress and After," in *Southeast Asian Affairs 2007*, ed. Daljit Singh et al. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2007), 387-388. John Kane, Hui-Chieh Loy, and Haig Patapan, *Political Legitimacy in Asia: New Leadership Challenges* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Frederick Brown, "Vietnam's Transformations: War, Development and Reform," in *Legacy of Engagement in Southeast Asia*, ed. Ann Marie Murphy et al. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 102.

Vietnam. Viet Tan has political connections with the Vietnamese Populist Party, an anti-communist organisation based in Vietnam. The important point worth noting here is that the founder and director of the Vietnamese Populist Party is Nguyen Cong Bang, who was arrested and sent to a communist re-education camp in 1979. After surviving the unimaginable dangers of the camp,<sup>26</sup> the survivor reacted by forming the Vietnam Populist Party in 2006, which operates as an anti-communist movement in Vietnam, and also forms a close alliance with other anti-communist political organisations operating overseas. This means not only that survivors living in exile work closely and carefully with each other, but also that the diasporic survivors resist the government of Vietnam together with survivors living in Vietnam.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, next to Viet Tan, the second organisation worthy of discussion is the Vietnam Populist Party, one of the prominent political partners of Viet Tan. As stated earlier, the secretary general of the Vietnam Populist Party is Nguyen Cong Bang, a Vietnam War survivor. Coinciding with our assumption that Bang's mentality is shaped by trauma of the Vietnam War, his online biography significantly shows that Bang had joined and served in the Republic of Vietnam Army, fighting against communism from 1973 until the end of the war in 1975.<sup>28</sup> In the early 1990s, he collaborated with the Vietnamese People's Party and Lien-Viet Coalition by launching a campaign for fair settlements for disputed-land cases with local authorities in rural areas.<sup>29</sup> He also founded the Social Assistance Program for Vietnam, a humanitarian program

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<sup>26</sup> Edward Metzner, Huynh Van Chinh, Tran Van Phuc, and Le Nguyen Binh, *Reeducation in Postwar Vietnam: Personal Postscripts to Peace* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2001). Hoa Minh Truong, *The Dark Journey: Inside the Reeducation Camps of Viet Cong* (Durham: Eloquent Books, 2010). Tran Tri Vu, *Lost Years: My 1,632 Days in Vietnamese Reeducation Camp* (Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, 1988). Le Huu Tri, *Prisoner of the Word: A Memoir of the Vietnamese Reeducation Camps* (Mill Creek: Black Heron Press, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Kim Nguyen, "'Without the Luxury of Historical Amnesia': The Model Postwar Immigrant Remembering the Vietnam War Through Anticommunist Protests," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (2) (2010): 136.

<sup>28</sup> Vietnam Populist Party, "About the Vietnam Populist Party," *Vietnam Populist Party*, accessed June 04, 2016, <http://www.vnpp.net/index.php/about-us/37-introduction/27-27>.

<sup>29</sup> Vietnam Populist Party, "About the Vietnam Populist Party."

specialising in orthopaedic surgery for handicapped children.<sup>30</sup> However, Banh was accused of having a malicious intentions against the communist regime in Hanoi, and was arrested in 1994 with a charge of initiating ‘Underground Anti-Government Plan’.<sup>31</sup> The arrest did not discourage him from joining a political movement against the communist as in 1998 he participated in the Vietnam Coalition Party and served as the Vice-President of the Executive Board until March 2004.<sup>32</sup>

After resigning from the coalition, Bang then co-founded the Vietnam Populist Party (VPP) in 2006, proclaiming that it was the opposition party to the ruling Vietnamese Communist Party,<sup>33</sup> and stating that its organisational missions are to promote human rights, democracy, and the social development of Vietnam. A statement of its official website expresses that “the organisation shares the common ideals of how to reform Vietnam and serve its people in the future” to be implemented through the following strategic priorities: (a) initiating momentum among the masses to prepare for the democratisation process; (b) building strong political coalition to manage any changing political circumstances; (c) supporting victims of human rights violations; (d) circulating the VPP’s official newsletter in Vietnam to educate working class people; (e) broadcasting Hoa-Mai Radio via radio and the internet to mobilise support for the human rights program; and (f) supporting and operating charitable activities to help relieve the hardship of handicapped persons in Vietnam.<sup>34</sup> It continues that “our immediate goal is a free

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<sup>30</sup> Vietnam Populist Party, “About the Vietnam Populist Party.”

<sup>31</sup> Vietnam Populist Party, “About the Vietnam Populist Party.”

<sup>32</sup> Vietnam Populist Party. “About the Vietnam Populist Party.”

<sup>33</sup> Vietnam Populist Party. “General Policy of the VNPP,” Vietnam Populist Party, accessed June 09, 2016, <http://www.vnpp.net/index.php/about-us/37-introduction/14-general-policy>. The website declares that “We do not accept the monopolistic leadership of Vietnamese Communist Party, do not collaborate with the Vietnamese Communist Party to share political power, do not seek political solution imposed by foreign countries, do not resort to violence as the means for our campaigns, do not encourage retaliating communist officials when regime changed.”

<sup>34</sup> Vietnam Populist Party, “Introduction of the Vietnam Populist Party,” accessed June 09, 2016, <http://www.vnpp.net/index.php/about-us/37-introduction/15-15>

and fair general election in Vietnam with the supervision of international human rights organisations to establish a multi-party democratic political system for Vietnam and our legitimate goal is to help build a new nation of Vietnam that offers peace, liberty, prosperity, and progressives.”<sup>35</sup>

The CVP has responded by accusing the VPP of destroying the democratic freedoms of Vietnam. In July 2008, the Kien Giang People’s Court’s verdict upheld a five-year prison sentence for Truong Minh Duc, an internet reporter, land rights activist, and VPP member facing charges for having malevolent intentions to abuse the democratic freedoms of Vietnam.<sup>36</sup> As the government’s retaliation to acts intending to challenge the status quo is to be expected, the significant point we can draw from this lies not in the conflict between the communist party and the movement against it, as this is in some ways natural in every nation. Rather, the significant point is the way survivors have used painful memories of the Vietnam War to justify their political protests against the present government and to discredit its legitimacy at the same time. It is crucial to note here that our analysis is far from the assumption that the devastation of the Vietnam War is a prime mover leading survivors to oppose the government. Bang’s biography shows that he was arrested and sent to a communist re-education camp in 1979, and thus implied both his painful memory as well as his longstanding enmity towards communists. Although the arrest and punitive actions of the Hanoi government are hardening, such governmental retaliation has not made Bang abort his current political objectives, and he continues to recall his painful memory of the Vietnam War to reveal the distortion and mismanagement of the country by the communist party in the mission statement of the VPP. Indeed, in his service as secretary general

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<sup>35</sup> Vietnam Populist Party, “Introduction of the Vietnam Populist Party.”

<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2009: Events of 2008.”, 326.

of the VPP, he even allows his organisation to appeal to the memory of the Vietnam War as part of its mission statement:

Since humankind has developed their civilisation and technology, people should have been living in freedom, equality and harmony. Over 4,000 years of history, Vietnamese people have been successfully struggling against hostile nature and invasions. Therefore, Vietnam has won its place in the world community. However, instead of rebuilding the country after the war, Vietnamese Communist Party had led the country into a state of crisis in the first fifteen years since 1975.<sup>37</sup>

Bang's recuperation of painful memories of the Vietnam War, portrayed in the mission statement of the VPP, resembles Diem's testimony insofar as they collectively show hostility and enmity to the communist government in Hanoi. Recalling painful memories of the Vietnam War is explicit in his expression 'instead of rebuilding the country after the war, Vietnamese Communist Party had led the country into a state of crisis in the first fifteen years since 1975.' Diem's testimony places stress on human rights violations, acts that show the communists' disrespect of the values of tolerance, pluralism, and democracy. Diem's testimony also recalls the memory of the re-education camp, which is similar to Bang's refusal to invoke directly memories of the re-education camp where he was interned, by choosing to imply his painful memory of the Viet Cong camp with the use of the word 'a state of crisis' instead of 're-education camp'. The Viet Tan and VPP not only share common political objectives, the two

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<sup>37</sup> Vietnam Populist Party, "About the Vietnam Populist Party."



high ranking officers- Diem and Bang- also share a collective memory of the Vietnam War and use such memory to condemn communism and justify their actions as anti-communist dissidents.

It can be suggested that Diem's testimony and Bang's recall of memory in the mission statement of the VPP meet with our analysis that the painful memory in the mind of survivors is used, recalled, and inflected by survivors in political opposition in the present. This requires another in-depth enquiry which asks whether collective memory can originate under conditions in which members are not situated in the same incidents of violence and trauma. Although members can face entirely separate traumas, surprisingly they appear to share the same memory. Why do members with different backgrounds and different experiences of trauma have a shared collective memory of the Vietnam War? Perhaps, this puzzle can be further illuminated by our discussion of the third anti-communist organisation.

The third organisation to be discussed in this chapter is Bloc 8406, an organisation in partnership with Viet Tan and VPP. Bloc 8406 was formed on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2006, the same day marked by the launch of the Manifesto on Democracy and Freedom for Vietnam worldwide.<sup>38</sup> The Bloc was initiated in Vietnam with 118 local Vietnamese people as original members before forming branches overseas.<sup>39</sup> The organisation claims that "The 8406 Manifesto has received warm support from many political, religious, and human rights activists, non-governmental organisations and friends from many countries in the world such as UK, Poland, Germany, Canada, United States of America, Japan, France, Czechoslovakia, and Australia. The Block members were praised for their efforts and courage in confronting totalitarianism and

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<sup>38</sup> International Business Publication, *Vietnam Electoral, Political Parties, Laws and Regulations Handbook*, 54.

<sup>39</sup> Nguyen Quang Duy, "Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam," accessed June 10, 2016. [www.aphref.aph.gov.au-house-committee-jfadt-hrdialoguechinavietnam-subs-sub10.pdf](http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au-house-committee-jfadt-hrdialoguechinavietnam-subs-sub10.pdf).

determination in fighting for freedom and democracy for Vietnam.”<sup>40</sup> The organisation seeks to: (a) struggle to establish a pluralist multi-party political system and democracy; (b) to practice non-violent means of struggle as have been exemplified by prominent historical figures as Gandhi and Martin Luther King; (c) to create the perception that the organisation is the force fighting for justice while its opponents (notably the CVP) are condemned as the repressive force of brutality.<sup>41</sup>

Bloc 8406 was founded in 2006, the same year as Democratic Party of Vietnam, and the two anti-communist political organisations have the same founder, Hoang Minh Chinh.<sup>42</sup> One of the founders of Bloc 8406, Hoang Minh Chinh survived the violence of the Vietnam War, a former communist, he later opposed the indiscriminate military action carried out against the South Vietnamese during the Vietnam War. Chinh was forced to spend over 20 years in prison for his ‘revisionist’ approach to Marxist-Leninist Philosophy and for his criticism of the CVP. He continued his advocacy of democratic reform after the Vietnam War despite he and his family facing intimidation, by reactivating the dissolved Democratic Party in 2006, which had been closed down by the CVP in the 1980s.<sup>43</sup> The survivor, for instance, expressed his disagreement with Article 4 of the Vietnam Constitution of 1992, according to which the communists are the only force capable of leading state and society without any internal or external interventions.<sup>44</sup> Significantly, in 2006- two years before he died- Chinh and Thich Quang Do, a Buddhist monk from the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and a survivor of the Vietnam War, were awarded the tile of ‘Democracy Courage Tribute’ with support from 600

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<sup>40</sup> Quang Duy, “Inquiry into Australia’s Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam.”

<sup>41</sup> Quang Duy, ‘Inquiry into Australia’s Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam.’

<sup>42</sup> Ian Jeffries, *Contemporary Vietnam: A Guide to Economic and Political Developments* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 29.

<sup>43</sup> Que Me, “On his deathbed, prominent dissident Hoang Minh Chich asked to be converted to Buddhism by Thich Quang Do,” accessed June 11, 2016, [http://queme.net/eng/news\\_detail.php?numb=942](http://queme.net/eng/news_detail.php?numb=942).

<sup>44</sup> Abuza, *Renovating Politics in Contemporary Vietnam*, 105.

activists worldwide. The two prominent Vietnam War survivors, who devoted themselves as longstanding political dissidents opposed to the Hanoi government, had known each other since 2005. Observing one exchange of letters between the two permits us to grasp how painful memories of the Vietnam War have been used by Chinh in order to rationalise his stance in opposing the communists in Hanoi. Chinh wrote:

I want to say how much I admire the actions of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. Thich Quang Do, along with all the UBCV clergy and followers, have waged a courageous combat for decades, since the fall of Saigon until today. We Vietnamese have suffered misery and humiliation for too long. It is time to unite. I call on all Vietnamese to join together in support of Thich Quang Do's proposals and struggle fearlessly to achieve them. We do not fear repression, imprisonment, intimidation. We must keep up the struggle for democracy, pluralism and human rights. This is the only way we can escape from our condition of slavery today.<sup>45</sup>

Although Chinh has reminded many Vietnamese of the principle of pluralism and of the nation as something that belongs to all Vietnamese people,<sup>46</sup> our crucial point of discussion is the use of memory as a justification of being a political dissident hostile to the Hanoi government. This guides our view that Chinh's letter can be interpreted above all else as a recall of the memory of the Vietnam War performed by the survivor. The political practice of the recall of memory is observed in such the expressions as 'since the fall of Saigon until today...we Vietnamese have suffered misery and humiliation for too long', 'we must keep up the struggle

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<sup>45</sup> Que Me, "On his deathbed."

<sup>46</sup> Sophie Quinn-Judge, "Hoang Minh Chinh: the honourable dissident," *Open Democracy*, accessed June 11, 2016, in [https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/vietnams\\_1968\\_dissidents\\_shadow](https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/vietnams_1968_dissidents_shadow).

for democracy, pluralism, and human rights, and ‘this is the only way we can escape from our condition of slavery today.’ Chinh’s letter is eventually and politically a supplement to Diem’s testimony and Bang’s recall of the Vietnam War in the VPP Mission Statement described earlier. That is to say, all of these practices signify a distinct strategy of the three prominent Vietnamese leaders of anti-communist organisations, which is to use painful memories of the past to reinforce their choice to be political dissidents in the present who are opposed to communist rule. From this viewpoint, it is nonetheless essential to recapitulate our earlier query regarding the question of collective memory, which stresses that it is rational to say that collective memory can form despite survivors’ different backgrounds, and survivors’ different experiences of violence, which erupted with different intensities and on different occasions. In response, the thesis has some small suggestions that perhaps it is plausible for collective memory to be formed and under the conditions in which survivors confront trauma in different times and spaces. This means, precisely, that there *are* so-called ‘multiple memories’ produced in different times and spaces. Survivors may have a tendency to follow the accounts of the multiple memories framed in different dimensions of times and spaces. This does not mean to suggest, however, that survivors will only follow such multiple memories. Although trauma was experienced in diverse times and spaces, survivors could eventually come up with the collective memory. In other words, our assumption about the collective memory of the Vietnam War survivor is that sharing experiences with other survivors can help to form an underlying memory.

I propose that collective memory is formed in a way that does not require people to have faced a trauma in the same time and in the same place. Take the fact that Diem, Ban, and Chinh who never associated with each other during the Vietnam War, have come up with the same collective memory about the torture and brutality exercised by Vietnamese communists. Take

also the scenario by which Chinh and Do, who had not known each other during the Vietnam War, become associated with each other in 2005. It remains the fact that Chinh was serving in a communist post during the time of war while Do was serving as a Buddhist monk. The two survivors come from entirely different backgrounds and faced different occasions of traumas in different times and places, but are nonetheless tied by the same collective memory, and hostility to the communist government. Those two examples guide us in the idea that collective memory can be formed in conditions in which survivors have faced different traumas with various degrees of violence which had taken place in different times and places. We have learnt just now from the scenario in Vietnam that collective memory does not always originate from situations in which survivors have shared the same intensities, disruptions, and occasions of violence and traumas.

In brief, there are several anti-communist organisations formed in and outside Vietnam, and survivors of the Vietnam War are leading members of those organisations. I have decided to focus on three anti-communist organisations, notably, the Viet Tan, the Vietnam Populist Party, and Bloc 8406, and to explore the painful memories that have arisen out of the trauma of the Vietnam War among the leading members in particular. Following lengthy discussions, it found at least three points that are significant findings for the thesis. First, the painful memory originated in the mind of these prominent survivors notably Diem, Ban, and Chinh before the end of the Vietnam War. Second, although the painful memory had originated in different times, spaces, locations, occasions, and intensities, it becomes a collective memory for the survivors. Third, the three survivors have used the painful memory in order to justify their decision to challenge the regime in Hanoi. The use of memory, recalling the memory of the past, stemmed from the experience of the Vietnam War, and it has been used in the present to delegitimise the

existing communist regime in Hanoi, eroding the official memory or the state's version of history, and to simultaneously promote democracy, human rights, and multi-party politics in the country. It remains to be seen whether these three findings can also be concluded in the remaining three case studies of the thesis, notably, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand. However, a focus on the issue of the use of memory remains insufficient for us to understand the formation of subjectivity of survivors following their interface with a trauma. In addition to the use of memory in the political movement against the government, we will explore the issue of subjectivity in relation to survivors' anti-communism in the next section. With the hypothesis that survivors have formed their subjectivities out of their painful memories, of their encounters with traumas, and of their oppositions to the communist government, the next section will explore the question of the subjectivity of the survivors.

### **Forming Subjectivities: Survivors, Traumas, and Art Productions**

This section aims to respond to the second research question outlined in the introductory chapter. It explores whether trauma and a painful memory are keys to understanding the subjectivity of survivors. In this section, the thesis hypothesises that art production will be a medium that allows us to understand the subjectivity of survivors. This issue has comprised of two interconnected hypotheses. On the one hand, some Vietnam War survivors may represent their subjectivities in relation to painful memory and trauma directly in art productions; that is to say, art production is the space in which trauma is acted out directly and explicitly. On the other, art production may not represent survivors' painful memories in a direct manner, but a particular way of interpreting art production allows us as spectators to access into the painful memory of

the survivors. This section focuses on anti-communist artworks, most of which are created by Vietnamese artists living in the diaspora, coupled with some art theory in order to interpret the artworks of the Vietnamese survivors.

From the perspective of the government, art production is one of the state instruments that the communist government has exploited for the dissemination of the communist vision of state and society.<sup>47</sup> Since before the Vietnam War, communists have insisted on the importance of the ideological struggle and- more explicitly- the revolutionary ideology and colonial memory of French colonialism and American expansion in Southeast Asia has exerted a powerful influence on society, culture including art.<sup>48</sup> It is anti-colonial memory as well as a revolutionary ideology that has coherently formed a political context, directing cultural production in such a way as to reinforce the state's official memory of the Vietnam War.<sup>49</sup> That is to say, "the writing of the past as a narrative of heroic and ultimately triumphant struggle against foreign domination and inscribing the future as a vision of communist utopia."<sup>50</sup> The official memorialisation of Vietnam War in artwork offers no space for anti-communist perspectives in Vietnamese art.<sup>51</sup> Nora Taylor suggests as much when she says that "in the Soviet Union and China, the Vietnamese artists who complied with the criteria set out by the government-sponsored artists' unions were favoured in the eyes of the state, those artists who chose to stay out of the unions or were rejected by authorities received little attention."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Taylor, "Framing the National Spirit," 110.

<sup>48</sup> Truong Chinh, *Vietnamese's Tradition on Trial, 1925-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 364. Kim N.B. Ninh, *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press), 46.

<sup>49</sup> Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 46.

<sup>50</sup> Hu Tai, *The Country of Memory*, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Nora Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art* (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004). 5.

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, "Framing the National Spirit," 110.

The anti-communist production of art among the Vietnamese diasporic community in the US remains a key determinant of identity among the Vietnamese overseas community.<sup>53</sup> Tran Nguyen argues this point when he says that “the Vietnamese ethics enclaves in the US had not put the war behind them. Veterans still wore uniforms and marched at public events. The South Vietnamese national anthem was still sung and the flag was still waved. The Vietnam War was absolutely central to the self-conscious formation of a group of activists and artists calling themselves ‘Asian Americans’ for the very first time in the late 1960s.”<sup>54</sup> Survivors seem to have a proud desire to memorise their histories, which are politically and morally contrasting with their need to forget.<sup>55</sup> Art production generates a space of creative and aesthetic practice, which emphasises that the war no longer continues on a battlefield, but in the arena of memory as well as in terms of artistic production and the reproduction of memory.<sup>56</sup> In the context of the Vietnamese diaspora, the thesis argues that artist survivors create artworks that are imbued with what Jenny Edkins calls “the effect of political works of art which can unsettle, disrupt, and challenge”<sup>57</sup> and therefore their effect is to create a non-consensual base in the relation of life to society.<sup>58</sup> This argument also resonated with what Maja Zehfuss calls ‘the double function of literature’<sup>59</sup> in which an artwork is interpreted as the production of a disturbing effect in the official memory of war.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Kieu-Linh Caroline Valverde, *Transnationalizing Viet Nam: Community, Culture, and Politics in the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 104.

<sup>54</sup> Viet Thanh Nguyen, “Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance,” *American Literary History* 25 (1) (2013): 144.

<sup>55</sup> Long Bui, “The Debts of Memory: Historical Amnesia and Refugee in The Reeduction of Cherry Truong,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 18 (1) (2015): 80.

<sup>56</sup> Thanh Nguyen, “Just Memory,” 144.

<sup>57</sup> Jenny Edkins, “Novel writing in international relations,” *Security Dialogue* 44 (4) (2013): 286.

<sup>58</sup> Lola Frost, “Aesthetics and Politics,” *Global Society* 24 (3) (2010), 442.

<sup>59</sup> Maja Zehfuss, *Wounds of Memory: The Politics of War in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 20-21.

<sup>60</sup> Edkins, “Novel writing in international relations,” 282.



The artwork of Vietnamese diasporic survivors is entwined with the new Vietnamese community in the US and the contribution of social or political resistance to domestic politics in Vietnam by using art as a political instrument.<sup>61</sup> Taylor's research on Vietnamese art production implies that what art production adds to historical studies of the Vietnamese imaginary is the significant role that artists play in the construction of historical discourse in Vietnam.<sup>62</sup> The Vietnamese community overseas, such as in Orange County, is hostile to Vietnamese arts produced in Hanoi, condemning it as a communist propaganda.<sup>63</sup> There is a sense of alienation in the relationship between the self, social, modernisation, culture, and urban life intrinsic in the very nature of Vietnamese artist living outside Vietnam,<sup>64</sup> which means that it is impossible to conclude that no Vietnamese artists have forgotten the agony of the past conflict<sup>65</sup> or that all of the artworks produced by the Vietnamese diasporas are only oppositional works directed against the discourse of patriotism. In fact, diasporic Vietnamese arts have dealt with multiple issues,<sup>66</sup> such as that of the globalisation and internationalisation of social change, as is evident in the work of Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba; urban progress and the impact of the transformation of geographical landscapes on cultural memory as shown in the work of Tiffany Chung; surrealist practice as demonstrated by the work of Nguyen Manh Hung; issues of identity and belonging in

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<sup>61</sup> Lan Duong and Isabelle Thuy Pelaud, "Vietnamese American Art and Community Politics: An Engaged Feminist Perspective," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 15 (3) (2012), 243.

<sup>62</sup> Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi*, 5.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi*, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Phoebe Scott, "'Imagining 'Asian' Aesthetics in Colonial Hanoi'" in *Asia through Art and Anthropology: Cultural Translation Across Borders*, ed. Fayubi Nakamura et al. (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), 58.

<sup>65</sup> David Thomas, *As Seen by Both Sides: American and Vietnamese Artists Look at the War* (MA: Indochina Arts Project, 1991), 21.

<sup>66</sup> The Culture Trip, "Vietnam's 10 Best Contemporary Artists and Where to Find Them," accessed June 16, 2016. in <http://theculturetrip.com/asia/vietnam/articles/vietnam-s-10-best-contemporary-artists-and-where-to-find-them/>.

the work of Danh Vo; the aesthetics of love and peace as displayed in the works of Trinh Cung and Nguyen Trung during the period of the Vietnam War,<sup>67</sup> just to name a few.

In this section of the thesis, we will narrow down the vast scope of Vietnamese art by focussing on the three Vietnamese artists whose art productions perform criticism of the Vietnamese government in Hanoi. The three artists, notably, Long Nguyen, Hong Dam, and Binh Danh have been chosen in the thesis because: (a) their works respond well to the research question in terms of the subjectivity of survivors in relation to a painful memory and a trauma; (b) their art has been exhibited internationally; (c) their works have gained acclaim from other artists and curators; and (d) their works represent trauma by means of the use of symbols and indirect images, leaving room for their viewers to interpret them.



Figure 1: Tales of Yellow Skin (Long Nguyen)

(<http://sjmusart.org/exhibition/tales-yellow-skin-art-long-nguyen>)

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<sup>67</sup> Boitran Huynh-Beattie, "Saigonese Art During the War: Modernity Versus Ideology," in *Cultures at War: The Cold War Cultural Expression in Southeast Asia*, ed. Tony Day et al. (New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2010), 96-97.

The first artwork that we will address is a piece by Vietnam War survivor Long Nguyen that commentators have acknowledged reflects disillusionment with official memory, which refuses to tell the unfortunate destiny of the boat people. Displayed at the San Jose Museum of Art in 2003,<sup>68</sup> Nguyen's *Tales of Yellow Skin* (Figure 1) tries to affect audiences by showing a series of paintings of dismembered body parts, including a life-sized boat textured with human organs to depict war and the experience of surviving refugees, these are the images more commonly accepted by anti-communist groups. The artists' childhood memories of the war and his experience of surviving the war is the essence of this work;<sup>69</sup> it is the series of paintings that express the artist's witness to destruction, vulnerability, killing, body-fragmentation, corpses, loss, and reconciliation with the past. According to SJMA senior curator JoAnne Northrup, "Nguyen's paintings and sculptures communicate the trauma of a wartime refugee's life in a graceful language that ultimately transcends the limitations of their specific origins to become universal stories of human suffering and potential for renewal."<sup>70</sup> The title *Tales of Yellow Skin* has anti-war implications because it refers to a popular Vietnamese anti-war song. The lyrics tell listeners the story of an innocent young girl killed by a stray bullet, describes the blood flowing over her yellow skin, and expresses remorse that the innocent girl died before knowing true love. Besides the artwork's central expression of anti-communist ideology and anti-war sentiment, the use of five organs of Chinese medicine exposes the artist's Taoist belief in the preservation of the

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<sup>68</sup> The San Jose Museum of Art, "Tales of Yellow Skin: The Art of Long Nguyen," accessed June 23, 2015 <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/3aa/3aa507.htm>.

<sup>69</sup> The Cinema Without Borders, "'The Vietnam War had a great influence in my art and shaping my personality'", Long Nguyen," *Cinema Without Borders*, accessed June 24, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> The San Jose Museum of Art, "Tales of Yellow Skin."

vital life force as well as a belief in metamorphosis, transformation, de-subjectivisation and re-subjectivisation,<sup>71</sup> the traversal of pain, and rebirth.

The second artist this chapter discusses is Hong Dam, a Vietnam War survivor, whose artistic expression implies anti-communist political ideology in the same way as Nguyen's. Dam's artwork has been exhibited at prestigious galleries such as The Mall Galleries and The Smith Gallery in London, Righton Gallery in Manchester and Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery, informing wider audiences of her childhood experience as one of the 'Vietnamese boat people' fleeing Vietnam for Hong Kong before resettling in the UK in 1980 (Figure 2).<sup>72</sup> Her work raises the question of subjectivity. Concentrating on the fragmentation of the self,<sup>73</sup> it illustrates the collective memory of diasporic survivors in digital images. In contrast to the theme of the unity of the nation prominent in mainstream artwork, Dam's work explores themes of displacement, the sense of not belonging to a nation, separation, loss, and the hope for a better life. The artists have received some feedback.<sup>74</sup> The artwork fills in the gap of memory and particularly the collective memory of the traumatised war-child and embodies the identity of belonging, assimilation, collectivity, and solidarity that emerges among survivors. It shows that subjectivity is formed by the relationship between art, the survivor, and the act of opposing the official memory. This point is addressed by some art theory literature, which focuses on conceptualising the image psychoanalytically and asks how structural questions of psychic processes such as melancholia, difference, and trauma are embodied in creative practices in

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<sup>71</sup> Jenny Edkins and Véronique Pin-Fat, "Through the wire: Relations of power and relations of violence," *Millennium Journal of International Studies* 34 (1) (2005): 1-24.

<sup>72</sup> The Trace Project, "Hong Dam," accessed June 16, 2016. <http://www.tracesproject.org/hong-dam/>.

<sup>73</sup> The Trace Project, "Hong Dam."

<sup>74</sup> Hong Dam, "AOH 2014 – Thank you for your wonderful comments," accessed June 13, 2016, <http://www.hongdam.co.uk/events/sympathy-for-the-dandelions-exhibition/>.

literature, art, and cinema.<sup>75</sup> Hal Foster, for instance, argues that the politicisation of trauma is the process through which the incorporation of the abject is made possible.<sup>76</sup> The abject is the condition of possibility for thinking about the dialectical and oppositional essence of trauma, which is excluded by the dominant cultural and societal discourses. One of the reasons why the Vietnamese diasporic-survivor living in Western Europe, Australia, and North America continues to remember their history and heritage is because they must be “self-mourners because no one else mourns them.”<sup>77</sup> The production of artwork entwined with the political opposition to the official memory tends to depart from the discourse of traditional art in Vietnam.<sup>78</sup> The term ‘practical aesthetic’ coined by Jill Bennett indicates that artworks are instrumental in representing the experiences of violence, devastation, and loss.<sup>79</sup> She argues that “art can capture and transmit real experience and sits uneasily with a politics of testimony,”<sup>80</sup> implying that artwork is not a testimony of the truth of violence or a traumatic incident. Following Bennett, it is plausible to suggest that art production represents- albeit indirectly- the sense of self-fragmentation and loss included in the artist’s political opposition. Art cautions viewers not to seek the truth of the incident through art, but understand thoroughly the subjective dimensions of the exhibited image. This is far from suggesting that art production carries testimony of truth and far from suggesting that art production serves to validate the truth of the violent incident.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Psychoanalysis and the Image* (Malden, Oxford, and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006), 3.

<sup>76</sup> Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: Art and Theory at the End of the Century: Avant-garde at the End of the Century* (MIT Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>77</sup> Thu-Huong Nguyen Vo, “Forking Paths: How Shall We Mourn the Dead?,” *Amerasia* 31 (2) (2005), 170.

<sup>78</sup> Jill Bennett, *Practical Aesthetics: Events, Affects, and Art after 9/11* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>80</sup> Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 11.



Figure 2: Wish (Hong Dam)

(<http://www.tracesproject.org/hong-dam/>)

The third artist is Binh Danh. By drawing upon his directly traumatic sensory-experience as a child, the artist has sought to represent the suffering of civilians, soldiers on patrol, and the dead corpses. The image-content is produced using the supremely natural technique of the so-called ‘chlorophyll printing process’, baking the image-content onto natural canvases with wild grasses and leaves (Figure 3).<sup>82</sup> Although the image-content placed on canvas with grasses and leaves implies the Buddhist belief of seeking peace, it is its juxtaposition against the traumatic memory that makes it a really gripping object indeed. The fascinating image thus consists of a double-bind identity to which such a fascinating image is nothing in itself but a mask of the horror: the encountering with death which lurks behind a decent image.<sup>83</sup> The image-content

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<sup>82</sup> The VX Art News, “Vietnam War Images, Photosynthesized.” accessed June 24, 2015. <http://www.vxartnews.com/2012/07/vietnam-war-images-photosynthesized/#.VYq1FqND31h>.

<sup>83</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 21.

inherent in Danh's work is associated with the non-state ideological representation of 'life', which suggest that the life-ontology of the traumatised person is a ruinous image which is not constituted as part of a symbolic dimension, and rather the remnant of antagonism to the symbolic order stems from the externality of the symbolic order of the Real.<sup>84</sup>

The portrayal of the form-of-traumatic-life in Danh's work produces the surplus enjoyment (*jouissance*) which, following Žižek's viewpoint, leads to the suggestion that it is not pointless for him to enjoy such a symptom. This reminds us of what Žižek calls 'the dialectic between the ordinary enjoyment and a surplus enjoyment,'<sup>85</sup> according to which ordinary enjoyment is ritualised enjoyment, often socially sanctioned, and which is structurally determined by the symbolic order or the state order. In contrast, surplus-enjoyment is different to ordinary enjoyment in the sense that cognitively it is a kind of obstinate enjoyment associated with the remaining pain of the traumatised persons. Its character does not fit into the symbolic order, and negating surplus-enjoyment is unable to seek the signifying position in the mainframe of the symbolic order.<sup>86</sup> Following Žižek's articulation of different forms of enjoyment, we can identify Danh's work with surplus enjoyment. A horrendous, traumatic incident is the constitutive element that lurks behind the decent image presented to viewers, and Žižek's analysis suggests that this contains aspects of the artist's surplus enjoyment. In addition to his political movement against official memory and his hostility to the Hanoi government, Danh's very Oriental, spiritual work shows his subjective dimension of the immanent memory of war. The memory of war overwhelms him and is stamped on his heart. And ironically, his anti-governmental account uses a decent image; the message of his political movement is conveyed to

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<sup>84</sup> Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom*, 22.

<sup>85</sup> Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom*, 22.

<sup>86</sup> Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom*, 22.

viewers by his enjoyment of his own symptom of the insistent trauma; albeit in an indirect manner.



Figure 3: Vietnam War Images, Photosynthesized (Binh Danh)

(<http://www.vxartnews.com/2012/07/vietnam-war-images-photosynthesized/#.VYq1FqND31h>.)

In brief, this section has sought to illuminate how artworks produced by Vietnam War survivors have allowed us to grasp how the pain of war has led to the formation of survivors' subjectivity. This section has operated with two interrelated hypotheses. The first of these is that artworks are the reflection of the subjectivities of survivors, indicating that survivors intend their artworks to be a mirror of the self, thought, and worldview. The second of these is that artworks are not reflexive of the subjectivities of survivors in such a direct manner, but that it is possible for spectators to grasp critically the subjective dimensions of them with particular assistance from the intellectual apparatus of art theory and psychoanalysis. To explore this, this section has



focused particularly on the artworks of three Vietnam War survivors, notably, Nguyen, Dam, Danh, in order to explore how their art-works address the interrelationship of war, memory, subjectivity, and survivors.

### **Reflecting the Case Study**

This section explores how the politics of survivors, discussed at length in the previous sections, can be placed within the intellectual framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Žižekian political theory as outlined in the first chapter. The application of Lacanian and Žižekian analyses allows us to draw four valuable points, notably: (1) it is impossible to achieve social harmony due to different people and groups upholding of different memories; (2) the use of memory as part of political movements is conditioned by both the conscious and the unconscious; (3) painful memory is the political object of desire and assures the existence of the symbolic order for survivors, but this painful memory is not a testimony of the truth of the incident as a whole; (4) survivors obtain *jouissance(s)* in political movements against the existing regime and recuperating painful memories while giving testimony of the traumatic incident to others.

First, our focus in this chapter has been on survivors who have been opposed to the communist government. Those survivors have succeeded by perturbing Vietnamese society under communism. The social struggle between the government and the political opposition to it highlights the impossibility of the social harmony, thereby invoking what Žižek offers as an alternative view to the regulative account of social harmony as not the truth, but as rather a social fiction that reproduces false enjoyment. From a Žižekian viewpoint, the communist government

of Vietnam repeatedly produces obscene enjoyment.<sup>87</sup> This aspect is eminently conceivable in the recurring emphasis of the official memory of the Vietnam War in which the government is seen in the eyes of all citizens as colonial liberator.

The view that official memory is a national enjoyment of the collective life of the citizenry is highly problematic. The belief that the state's official memory is thematic of the knowledge for the social enjoyment obtainable from regulating the narrative of the Vietnam War is untenable, given the fact that the official view in itself is a preclusion of the site of various memories. It is assumed that there are some Vietnam War survivors who have found this crest of national enjoyment as the truth of the history of the Vietnam War. The North Vietnamese survivor contains the example of our discussions. In addition, there are some Vietnamese survivors who disagree with the official memory, accompanied by some survivors who hold different view to the official memory but are reluctant to challenge the power of the government. With concerns about threats to life, and anxiety about the Hanoi government's menace, survivors are forced to show faith in the official memory and are forced ambivalently to embrace the official memory as the truth of the Vietnam War. The memory of war that survivors have possessed of is distinctly and naturally fractured, at least in the multiplicities of the following threefold. There is, firstly, the existence of the survivors who are obedient and faithful to Hanoi's mythical memory of the Vietnam War. But with the existence of disobedience coupled with attempts to subordinate the official memory, this rapidly leads us to question social cooperation in making society harmonious, but not without the ambivalence of some survivors, who possess alternative memories to the official one yet do not stand up against the official memory for political reasons. Finally, there are survivors who seek to disrupt the superficial

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<sup>87</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 45.

harmony of Vietnamese society, who form the third group of Vietnam War survivors, who have rallied behind the anti-communist banner.

As a result, there is no single memory that could bind all of the scattered memories of wartime. The impossibility of one overarching memory means that an official memory that aims to create and sustain social harmony is the utopian fantasy. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the camouflaging images of the unidentified memories that are determinant in obfuscating the official memory reflects the lack residing at some points in the symbolic order.<sup>88</sup> There are of certainties the existential entities of the site of various memories. Those memories spontaneously retreat themselves from the espousals of the official memory; the withdrawal of memories has thereby generated lack in the official memory and has notably presented fragmentariness in contradistinction to the unity of the official version. The lack immanent in the official memory in turn is suggestive of that the memory of the Vietnam War, the possibilities of remembrances held differently by the uncompromising perspectives of survivors, which is always in excess to the official memory. The prevalence of the manifold memories of the Vietnam War in excess makes the dominant existence of the big Other ill-conceived. It is the multiplicity of memory, irrespective of the big Other, that has a devastating impact on the big Other; in other words, it is the formless character of the multiplicity of memory that castrates and kills the big Other. The big Other is deprived of its existence, and, in retrospect makes the theory of memory congruent with the tradition of Lacanian psychoanalysis: that is to say that there is no such thing as an overarching memory that is successful in becoming the overarching memory for others. The deprivation of the big Other in the Lacanian account makes the official memory controlled by the government and the anti-official memory possessed by anti-communist survivors mutually

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<sup>88</sup> Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 13.

perilous. Both endeavour to establish itself as the big Other as *the* memory of the war. As shown in previous sections, they are the partialities of the political stakeholders who have decided to make use of their wartime memories as political instruments to control Vietnamese society. This immediately suggests that none of the memories can be held as the genuine memory of war; and none of those big Other(s) are successful in inventing memory except to exert it tactically and meaningfully as a political instrument. This issue will be described in relation to subjectivity in the second point.

Second, language is insufficient to express the unfathomable character of a trauma. The Real is irreducible to the symbolic order, but is key to the formation of the subjectivity of survivor. Although the traumatic incident is a matter of both personal and collective experiences that the survivor is mostly incapable of recounting and communicating trauma in testimony, language remains the essential arbitrator for the access to the subjectivity of survivor. Precisely, subjectivity – the ontology of self-reflection and self-understanding to the world – is mirrored in the conscious and the unconscious as making false the self-understanding of the conscious (*méconnaissance*),<sup>89</sup> while language expresses inner thought to the world. Language succeeds in making it possible to observe the inner thought of one subject as the individual and of the subjectivities of the others. This psychoanalytic interpretation revolved around the issue of language, subjectivity, conscious, and unconscious and relies on two assumptions.

The first assumption is that the use of memory tells us about the conscious of the survivor, and testimony illustrates the subjectivity of survivor. This suggests that survivors deliberately illuminate their subjectivity through giving testimony; memory used to further

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<sup>89</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (London and New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 43-44.

political goals clearly represents the conscious subjectivity of the survivor. The second assumption is that the use of memory is less the expression of the conscious than it is of the survivor's unconscious. This assumption leads to the second argument of this chapter, which is that testimony, in some parts of the discourse, is not intentional on the part of survivors. Metaphor is an example of the unconscious. Occasionally survivors have slipped and revealed what they have in their minds in terms of metaphor; metaphor allows us to access subjectivity.<sup>90</sup> While it is possible for us to decode the metaphor, we should be aware that it is a huge challenge and that metaphor can hardly be embodied in a vivid expression. In this sense, we follow Cathy Caruth who suggests that trauma is the unrealised ego of the subject, a perspective entwined with Lacan's definition of the unconscious as the unknown-known essential to the subject but which is usually misrecognised by the subject. In effect, in respect to the second assumption, memory is often portrayed as something used for political advantage, but it is often unintended by the survivor.

Thus, these two assumptions have stimulated the debate not only about the subjectivity of the survivor, but also about the intentional use of memory for political purposes. The two assumptions share the viewpoint that testimony about trauma, and the linguistic representation of it, be it located in either the conscious or the unconscious, is a clue to grasp subjectivity of survivor. Where the two assumptions have produced contradictory accounts is that while the first assumption considers subjects intentional in the use of memory, as a tactic in the course of political movements, the second assumption is critical of this interpretation. The latter suggests that the use of memory in the course of political movements is accidental and not the intention of survivor.

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<sup>90</sup> Russell Grigg, *Lacan, Language, and Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), 160.

Testimonies of Vietnam War survivors, notably those of Diem, Banh, and Chich, give a clear example of the use of memory in relation to subjectivity, testimony, conscious, and unconscious. Corresponding to the first assumption that the discourse of testimony is a conscious choice of the survivor, the three surviving persons' testimonies of the Vietnam War recall painful memories through such vivid expressions as 'the CPV sent hundreds of thousands of people into prison camps where thousands died' (Diem), and 'Since the fall of Saigon until today...we Vietnamese have suffered misery and humiliation for too long... We must keep up the struggle for democracy, pluralism, and human rights... this is the only way we can escape from our condition of slavery today' (Chinh). This shows the intention in recalling a painful memory in order to challenge the legitimacy of the communist government. Such testimonies are presumably not the big Other, and thus treating testimonies that are political tactics as the true history of the Vietnam War is ill-advised.

However, the second assumption about the unconscious makes this matter more of a dilemma. This assumption suggests that survivors' testimonies may not be fully conscious decisions to use testimony politically, but rather these expressions are just the subject's worldview inadvertently emerging. Lacanian psychoanalysis abstains from providing a clear description of this, as it only makes the matter more intriguing by asking whether those expressions are used politically yet unconsciously by survivors, or whether those expressions are being used voluntarily on the basis of survivors' full consciousness; the division between conscious and unconscious in relation to the political use of memory in testimony becomes blurred. In addition, given the role of the metaphor as a path to the unconscious of the subject as was mentioned earlier, one may take into account Bang's use of the phrase 'a state of crisis' in which has been used plausibly as a substitution for the word 're-education camp'. Interpreting

Bang's phrase 'a state of crisis' is not irrelevant to a discussion of the unconscious, as it is possible that although this phrase is a way of avoiding expressing a painful memory explicitly, the language is a clue to access survivor's experience of being interned in a communist's concentration camp shortly after the war. We have learnt from this point that language serves as a key to the subject's unconscious – the relationship between language and unconscious that is crucial because Lacan identified that 'unconscious is structured like a language'<sup>91</sup> – and to the subjectivity of the survivor.

Third, it is possible to suggest that the encounter with trauma remains influential on the lives of survivors; despite the fact that it is hard for survivors to accept that trauma intrudes on their life. In relation to the experience of a trauma, survivors are distressed individuals, more acquainted with violence than ordinary people, and are individuals for whom painful memories constitute part of their subjectivity. The painful memory that forms part of the subjectivity of the survivor represents an immovable painful memory of war, but also determines how survivors exist within the symbolic order. The existence of the symbolic order constituted by the painful memory suggests that burdened with the wound of painful memory is desirable for survivors. It is not wrong to assume that painful memory is the origin of survivor's guilt and this guilt alienates survivors from social integration. In effect, survivor's guilt exacerbates survivors deprived of the existence in the symbolic order and it may discourage survivors from articulating their painful memories to others. I nonetheless suggest a view contrary to this, where the survivor's guilt from the painful memory of war is not the psychological factor that alienates them from the symbolic order; rather, it helps them to map their self-existence in the symbolic order.

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<sup>91</sup> Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 8.

This suggestion leads us to identify painful memory psychoanalytically as the object cause of desire, something which in Lacan is conceptually called *the object petit a*. In chapter 1, I argued that the object of desire in Lacanian psychoanalysis conceptually designates the presence of the object, which is possible for the subject to take such an object into account as the utmost desirability, and such a desirable object is potentially a substitution for the ontologically undesirable. The ontology of desire is presumed as the castration of desire. The presence of the object of desire, which is nonetheless prerogative of substituting the desire castration, illuminates- albeit problematically- the possible connection between the subject, desire, and the object. In other words, with the realisation of the desire's castration as the ontology of desire, the object of desire connected to the subject simply serves as 'a cause' for the subject to indulge with that desire, which is not the authentic one, and for the subjects to pause that inauthenticity of desire at the point of taking it immediately as the utmost desirability, or else the subjects completely abstain from interspersing with the object of desire forever. To prevent the object of desire from vanishing, such 'cause' of the object cause of desire designates that there is an object – *the object petit a* – that serves to sustain the fantasy where desire is immediately paused and such fantasy – the point where desire is paused – is a castration of the subject's access to the non-existent authentic desire.<sup>92</sup>

The main argument at this point is that painful memory in relation to the subjectivity of survivor is intertwined with the Lacanian term of the object cause of desire. Painful memory, which is equally weighed as the object cause of desire, serves as apprehension of the subjective constitution of the survivor's existence in the symbolic order. This theoretical viewpoint can be seen in the case of the Vietnam War survivors as Nguyen, Dam, and Danh who are also artists.

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<sup>92</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 90.



Incorporating the memory of war into artworks is a way for the survivor's self-declaration of existence in the symbolic order, and the overcoming of self-alienation depreciates survivor's guilt. Although artists intended to hide their personal opinions of war and memory, a psychoanalytic interpretation suggesting that these survivors have used their painful memories in art in order to declare their existence in the symbolic order and overcome self-alienation. Painful memory is not something that survivors seek to forget, but is quintessentially the object of desire for a qualitative remembrance and central to the formation of the self in relation to others. Crucially, representation of painful memory in testimony and artwork is used by survivors to situate themselves in the symbolic order; it never stands as the truth of the traumatic incident. So, the main argument is survivors find their existences and subjectivities in the symbolic order not through the survivor's guilt but through articulating their painful memories either in testimonies, evidently carried out by Diem, Banh, and Chich, or in artworks such of those of Nguyen, Dam, and Danh. In this context, it is important for us to remember that painful memory so apparent in testimony and artwork only serves as a self-existential purpose and not as the truth of the traumatic incident.

Another important argument is that testimony and artwork not only serve to alleviate the extreme violence of the traumatic incident, but also more intriguingly as *the object petit a*, a sustaining point of desire in which the illumination of the overburdened image of the traumatic incident is paused. On the assumption of the impossibility of access to the horrendous image of the traumatic incident, the Real, it is the painful memory expressed in testimony and in art, which is *the object petit a* that substitutes the inaccessible Real. The testimony and art containing the painful memory of survivors stand as a point where the traumatic incident is partially glimpsed, despite the impossibility of grasping the full image of the Real. The portrayal

of painful memory in testimonies and in art-works, coupled with its function as a fantasy that conceals the Real, affirms the self-existence of the survivor; endeavours to give an entire image of the Real in the symbolic order are never successful. Although such testimony and art-production contains the inauthentic image of trauma, it is only the most desirable point where the minimal expression of the Real is graspable. The minimal expression of the Real through testimonies and artworks where survivors seek to situate themselves in the symbolic order is the best way in coping with the problem of representing the Real. That is to say, having something that tries to represent the Real is better than the swift abandonment of the Real or being entirely oblivious to the Real, although it is important to realise that what survivors have represented in testimonies and artworks are not the Real as such; survivors have simply made use of testimony and artworks as the substitution of the Real in the course of managing their social existences.

Fourth, notably, social existence is dependent upon survivors' use of testimony and art-work as a means to sustain and enhance their voices in Vietnamese society. As such, recalling trauma is not counted as activating painful memory, but it can be argued that it is necessary to invoke these painful memories for survivors' social existence. Vietnam War survivors arguably have not evaded reactivating their experience of trauma. On the contrary, they have weirdly enjoyed the invocation and reactivation of these experiences. In this sense, apart from suggesting that survivors' guilt is perhaps less useful for shedding light on the politics of survivors, the assumption that such acts might lead to depressive emotions in survivors is also less likely. I have argued in Chapter 1 that there is another category of enjoyment, which transgresses the norm and hence does not fit well with ordinary enjoyment; such categorical enjoyment is what Lacan calls *jouissance*. I argue that *jouissance* that emerged following the trigger of trauma is interpolated by the political tactics involved in evoking a painful memory,

interlaced with survivors affirmation of their social existences and constitutive of subjectivities, thereby negating the assumption that recalling trauma has activated survivors' distressing experiences.

In addressing the history of the Vietnam War from their personal and collective memories to others, it seems that the Vietnam War survivors find it a political necessity to recall the political crimes committed by the communists against its citizens. Thus, recalling trauma is a political necessity and grants legitimacy to political movement against the government. Three prominent survivors, notably Diem, Banh, and Chich, have used their anti-communist testimonies to encourage a transition from communism to democracy. From this viewpoint, we see that the recall of trauma does not reflect a depressive moment in survivors but rather an act of enjoyment. Drawing on Lacanian perspective, enjoyment when painful memories are used in the course of a political movement signifies *jouissance* in survivors. Again, the Lacanian concept of *jouissance* leads to an interpretation of artworks that contain traumas as a *jouissance* of self-declaring survivors' existence in the symbolic order. So, illuminating the subjectively painful memory in art exhibitions contains dimensions of *jouissance*, rather than overburdening survivors with a depressive moment. Although *jouissance* is maintained contrapuntally as a conceptual encounter to a depressive moment as a result of a trauma trigger, such a Lacanian interpretation on survivors' *jouissance(s)* in relation to political movement and the use of painful memory to enhance legitimacy is subject to challenge. The main reason is although a Lacanian concept is applicable to some extent, applying psychoanalysis to understand the politics of survivors in relation to testimony and the use of memory remains speculative. It simply initiates another dimension of thought and does not aim at providing a seamless description of the whole issue.

In brief, the case study of the politics of the Vietnam War survivor from a psychoanalytic perspective leads to four main points of discussion. To recapitulate, the first point aims to suggest the prevalence of multiple memories, which negate the official memory of the Vietnam War, enacted as the big Other. The presence of multiple memories affirms the assumption that society without any conflict is a utopian fantasy. The ‘non-existence of the big Other’ notifies us at this point that there are neither such memories as the official memory or the anti-official memories, the outcry registers in the symbolic order, which will be successful in contributing the truth of the traumatic event to us as one of the viewers, listeners, and spectators. This leads to the second point, which suggests that the anti-government survivors, who are assumed to make use of the painful memory, portrayed in testimonies, as a political instrument in the struggle over the Hanoi government. The question is raised at this point whether such a use of memory is a conscious effort of survivors, or whether the use of memory as a political instrument is an unconscious act, a thought that accidentally slips into the world independent from the subject’s control. The split location of thought, divided into the conscious and the unconscious, coupled with the testimonies and art-work on display, challenges the assumption of survivors’ guilt. Under a sustaining belief that guilt will diminish survivors’ ability to deal properly with self-alienation, the third point assumes that painful memory is taken by survivors as the object of desire rather than something to be guilty of. Although the painful memory cannot be taken as the truth of the incident, survivors enjoy speaking of the painful memory in relation to their experience of trauma. In particular, the use of memory in order to self-declaring one’s position in the symbolic order as well as its use in political movements suggests why the recall of trauma is not exhaustive or universal among survivors. The fourth point is a logical consequence of this. By arguing that the use of memory is *jouissance*, it serves as a response to a trigger of trauma,

presupposed as the arrival of a depression in survivors, by suggesting on the contrary that the recall of trauma is the object of desire as well as a *jouissance*. Here, two recurring reasons converge, and notably, trauma is recalled to make use of it as a political instrument in the self-formation of the symbolic order for Vietnam War survivors.

## **Conclusion**

The emphasis of this chapter has been answering the first research question, by exploring how Vietnam War survivors, whose lives continue to be affected by memories of the Vietnam War, have participated in a political movement against the communist government in Hanoi. The case study suggests that survivors have sought to make use of their personal memory (including collective accounts) in order to articulate an alternate category of memory that reveals how the communists had abused and tortured their people in re-education camps. From the perspectives of the three prominent survivors discussed earlier, the alternate memory, that is to say the ‘anti-official memory’, has revealed how the communists disrespected the human dignity of citizens, which has corroded the legitimacy of the regime. In this sense, recalling memory is not always something that brings depressive emotions to survivors. On the contrary, I argue following my Lacanian interpretation of survivors’ testimonies that the act reflects the use of memory, and as such the use of memory reflects the survivor’s subjectivity. By making the recall of memory serve the political objective of overthrowing the Hanoi government, the act creates extreme enjoyment for survivors and is simultaneously useful for survivors to declare their self-existence in the symbolic order. From the psychoanalytic perspective, however, it remains unclear whether the political use of memory is an act that survivors have carried out

voluntarily or involuntarily. In other words, psychoanalysis leaves the matter unclear because of the gap it locates between the survivor's consciousness and their unconscious.

From this viewpoint, we can see the truth of Lacan's observation that 'there is no such thing as the big Other', which in the case of the Vietnam War survivors means that none of the memories formed by the government, or by the survivors in opposition to the government, can be taken as the truth of the war. All of the manifold dimensions of memory seek to establish themselves as the truth of the war by proclaiming their accounts as the utmost desirability, but such projection in the symbolic order either with the use of artwork or testimony discourse only elucidates their own objects of desire in telling and retelling their painful memories with political purposes. In retrospect, this articulation of memory into the symbolic order forms the imaginary of the truth, an act that entirely abandons the truth and we should certainly be cautious about taking this memory as the Real.

In response to the second research question, which asks about the relationship between subjectivity and trauma, the chapter explores the artworks of survivors. In so doing, it is assumed that artworks are portrayals of the subjectivities of survivors. Alongside the psychoanalytic assumption of conscious, unconscious, desire, and *jouissance*, we can be sceptical about the idea that artworks are produced by Vietnam War survivors to communicate the truth about the past, as we see artworks used to pursue the aims of a political movement. As we can say that artworks are used for political purposes, artworks cannot completely represent the truth of the traumatic incident. Those works are useful for the self-manifestation of survivors' subjectivity in relation to the memory of war, and affirm their excessive enjoyment. The actual truth of the incident and its representation in artwork is irrelevant at this point.

Before continuing the study with regards to the politics of survivors of the Khmer Rouge in the next chapter, it is useful to note some suggestions for future research into the memory of Vietnam War survivors. The thesis suggests three main focuses for future research on the topic. First, as the thesis only focuses on the conflict between official memory and anti-official memory, it seems that many points of analysis contained in this chapter place a heavy emphasis on this binary opposition. Therefore, useful work could be done exploring the existence of local or provincial memories that presumably exist across the various regions of Vietnam. It remains a task for future researchers to examine how the local people in Hue, for instance, have memorised the war and whether there are any conflicts between the way that people in this province remember the war in comparison to those in other provinces such as Da Nang, Phan Thiet, and so on. Second, it is important to understand how the Vietnam War is a regional memory. This thesis has approached memories of the war from the Vietnamese perspective. This may make the thesis useful for scholars who wish to escape the seemingly magnetic pull of the American perspective on Vietnam war scholarship. Future researchers may also wish to explore the Vietnam War from a regional perspective, exploring the conflict from a Cambodian perspective, a Thai perspective, and the Singaporean perspective; as well as how Vietnam War survivors have played a role in the so-called 'regional remembrance of war'. Third, the thesis only focuses on Vietnam War survivors and their political participation, and political efforts to drive the country towards democracy. A heavy focus on the domestic level, certainly, creates a puzzle for future researchers with regards to the survivor's political response in the wider global arena. Instead of understanding political action only in terms of the domestic level, it is important to explore how survivors of the Vietnam War have dedicated their political actions in response to other

significant global events such as the 9/11, the war in Syria, ISIS, bombs in Turkey, attacks in Paris, and so on.



## **Chapter Three**

### **The Politics of Cambodian Survivors:**

#### **A Movement for the Regime Change and a Quest for Justice**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the politics of the Cambodian survivor in post-civil war Cambodia. The thesis defines Cambodian survivors as persons surviving the Khmer Rouge's atrocity and violence. In this chapter, I argue that these survivors continue to play an important role in Cambodian politics in the present, especially given the country's culture of authoritarianism under the one-party system. It is worth highlighting that there are survivors who choose to become a member of Hun Sen's party, while there are also those who are active within civil society and through their testimonies seem to use painful memories in order to promote democracy, defend human rights, and even put political pressure on Hun Sen for his resignation. This suggests that although the Khmer Rouge survivors share a collective memory of having to endure with a traumatic incident of violence and atrocity committed by Pol Pot and his followers, this does not mean that survivors have to engage politically in the same way. Therefore, this chapter proposes in addition to the previous chapter on Vietnam that it is important to differentiate between the 'privileged survivor', or, a survivor who has served as a governmental officer in Hun Sen's cabinet, and the 'pro-democracy survivor', which is a survivor whose political action is to protest and resist Hun Sen's authoritarianism. Succinctly, both types of survivors share a collective memory of the Khmer Rouge, but differ in terms of political activities, beliefs, actions, and ideologies in contemporary Cambodian politics.

The chapter proceeds through four main sections. The first section discusses the political context of Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge to the present. It highlights how the Khmer Rouge had destroyed old memories of former regimes by introducing a new 'national memory'. Meanwhile, the contemporary Cambodia that is characterised by an alliance between government and the business bloc in the neo-liberal context has led to widespread corruption, including violence imposed by the state against the Cambodian protestors. It is necessary to examine current Cambodia's political context because it is the main context in which the politics of the Cambodian survivor is situated. The second section examines the politics of the Cambodian survivor by arguing that there are both survivors who prefer authoritarian rule due to their economic interests, and survivors who attempt to promote regime change in the country. Here, my chief focus is the politics of the survivor, which is related to the principle of Žižek's ultrapolitics that I outlined in the introductory chapter, coupled with the survivors' use of memory may be considered possible parts of a process of regime change.

In the third section, the thesis focuses on a very distinct event in Cambodian politics, and event which is not available in the other three case studies of the thesis. This event is the prosecution of the Khmer Rouge aggressors at the so-called 'hybrid court', established through cooperation between local Cambodian and international courts. As a survivor from S-21 (a secret camp established by Pol Pot) had been asked to give a testimony, the court endorsed the testimony as sufficient evidence for guilt to be established. In the last section, the chapter gives an overall reflection by combining the arguments of the chapter into an analysis presented in terms of the Lacanian and Žižekian theoretical frameworks. The thesis attempts to show how the Lacanian and Žižekian framework are appropriate in reflecting theoretically and practically the nature of political antagonism in Cambodia that is relevant to

the idea of ultrapolitics, post-politics, democracy, antagonism, fantasy, the *object petit a*, the Real, and importantly, the formation of Cambodian survivors' subjectivities.

### **The Contemporary Context of Cambodian Politics: Forming Official Memory/Forgetting State Crime**

In this section, I suggest that the rise of the Khmer Rouge regime shows not only the political violence conducted by the Khmer Rouge against its people, but is also reflective of its attempt to destroy memories of the old regime. The objective was to force the Cambodian people to only memorise and to take into account the Khmer Rouge's presence as the new mode of remembrance while forcing them to ignore the old regime outright. However, after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1975, Cambodia's political system has been one of 'hybrid democracy'. My analysis suggests that the ways in which the country has been connected to neo-liberalism and the market economy compels the Cambodian people to naturally forget the state crimes of the past. Following this, I attend to some survivors who have decided to bring that memory back into the present, where neo-liberal rationalities seem to encourage people to quickly forget that state crimes occurred in the past.

On 17 April 1975, the communist Khmer Rouge established Democratic Kampuchea and declared an end to over two thousand years of Cambodian history.<sup>1</sup> The Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot announced a new beginning and the 'new Cambodia' eventually lasted for three years, eight months, and twenty days. The people of 'new' Cambodia were subjected to a cataclysmic social experiment as part of what could be called as "the world's most radical revolution."<sup>2</sup> The Khmer Rouge had written a new memory for the nation and anyone who

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Clayton, "Building the New Cambodia: Educational Destruction and Construction under the Khmer Rouge," *History of Education Quarterly* 38 (1) (1998), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Kiernan, "The Survival of Cambodia's Ethnic Minorities," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 14 (3) (1990): 64.

maintained memories of the old regime was considered a criminal.<sup>3</sup> The Khmer Rouge's educational programme was aimed to educate Cambodians about the new memory of the nation<sup>4</sup> by repudiating its past.<sup>5</sup>

Firstly, the Khmer Rouge had a clear objective in implementing agricultural policy to rebuild Cambodia to be a purely agrarian country and city dwellers were forced to begin new lives as farm workers.<sup>6</sup> The reason for this focus on agrarian society was that cities were viewed as products of Western influence, centres of decadence and conspicuous consumption, and impediments to change.<sup>7</sup> The regime adopted a Marxist vision of the dictatorship of the proletariat and applied it to the country until Vietnamese invasion brought the regime to an end in January 1979.<sup>8</sup> The regime withdrew Cambodia from the global capitalist system, something that some scholars have identified as the cause of Cambodia's current underdevelopment.<sup>9</sup> While the Khmer Rouge envisioned the creation of an agrarian utopia, some scholars have argued that in reality, the implementation of national proletarianisation was a reversal of social stratifications that exacerbated rather than eliminated class conflict.<sup>10</sup> Through the implementation of "The Four Year Plan", the Khmer Rouge aimed to

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<sup>3</sup> Alex Hilton "Truth, Representation, and the Politics of Memory after Genocide" in *People of Virtue: Reconfiguring Religion, Power and Moral Order in Cambodia Today*, ed. Alexandra Kent et al. (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008), 62.

<sup>4</sup> Francois Ponchaud, *Cambodia Year Zero*, trans. Nancy Amphoux (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 128.

<sup>5</sup> Evan Gottesman, *Cambodia After the Khmer Rouge: Inside the Politics of Nation Building* (Chelsea: Sheridan Books, 2003), 13.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Quinn, "Pattern and Scope of Violence," in *Cambodia. 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death*, ed. Karl Jackson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 181. James Tyner, *The Killing of Cambodia: Geography, Genocide and the Unmaking of Space* (Burlington and Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 151.

<sup>7</sup> Quinn, "Pattern and Scope of Violence," 181-182.

<sup>8</sup> Kathryn Klein, "Bringing the Khmer Rouge to Justice: The Challenges and Risks Facing the Joint Tribunal in Cambodia," *Northwestern Journal of International Human Rights* 4 (3) (2006). Jackson, *Cambodia 1975-1978*, 55.

<sup>9</sup> Khieu Samphan, *Cambodia's Economy and Industrial Development* (Cornell, Cornell University of Southeast Asia, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Clayton, "Building the New Cambodia: Educational Destruction and Construction under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979," *History of Education Quarterly* 38 (1) (1998): 4.

agriculturalise the entire country,<sup>11</sup> and transform it into a society that was no longer overwhelmed by unequal power relations; no exploiters, exploited, rich and poor.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, the Khmer Rouge turned around the Cambodian economy, moving away from the market based economy and destroying much of the country's money.<sup>13</sup> Under the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia moved towards an economy based on socialist principles.<sup>14</sup> The Khmer Rouge stressed the importance of economic self-reliance and stimulating rice production,<sup>15</sup> which resulted in a plan to build up social infrastructure based around communal structures.<sup>16</sup> Psychologically, this policy was seen as a remedy to the wounding memories of the country's colonial history,<sup>17</sup> as necessary for constructing the new and the economically self-reliant Cambodia. Socialism was considered to be a new memory for Cambodians that would emancipate them from the shackles of a past clouded by American imperialism and the Lon Nol administration.<sup>18</sup> The nation would not become truly independent unless it disdained all foreign influences and assumed total control of its own affairs.<sup>19</sup> The launch of the Four Year Plan to 'build socialism in all fields'<sup>20</sup> collectivising such properties as fields, orchards, farmlands, factories, trains, automobiles, ships and motor boats,<sup>21</sup> could be interpreted as an attempt to abolish the conscious memory of the past and equally to emancipate Cambodia from the old regime in which the monarchy and corrupt politicians possessed an abundance of invaluable properties.<sup>22</sup> The Khmer Rouge attempted to remove all of the nostalgic elements rooted in liberal and capitalist culture, such as the

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<sup>11</sup> Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (London and New Haven: 2014), 167.

<sup>12</sup> Kent and Chandler, *People of Virtue*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> David Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 240.

<sup>14</sup> Jackson, *Cambodia 1975-1978*, 43.

<sup>15</sup> Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, 256.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Twinning, "The Economy," in Karl Jackson, *Cambodia 1975-1978*, 111.

<sup>17</sup> Samphan, *Cambodia's Economy and Industrial Development*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, 256.

<sup>19</sup> Jackson, *Cambodia 1975-1978*, 39.

<sup>20</sup> David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1993), 214.

<sup>21</sup> Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, 262.

<sup>22</sup> Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, 101, 167.

market economy, money, and private property.<sup>23</sup> It was clear that the Khmer Rouge's aim was to discourage Cambodians from remembering former regimes and to replace these with a new memory that Cambodia was a country that was no longer dominated by capitalism, imperialism, and monarchism.<sup>24</sup> Anyone who refused to extricate themselves from the past was murdered and the refusal to relinquish traditional cultures from the past became the Khmer Rouge's justification to kill subversive persons. During the Khmer Rouge's rule, many artists left the country and many people such as doctors, lawyers, architects, students, technicians, skilled workers, and school teachers<sup>25</sup> were executed because of their links with western knowledge.<sup>26</sup> In the Khmer Rouge's view, western knowledge was a relic of the country's colonial past, and these old way of doing things must have no place in the new society.<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, the regime aimed to create a 'new socialist man', or, the legitimate citizens who can occupy the country by way of forming the specific 'organisation' (*Angka*) based on an ideal of collective egalitarianism.<sup>28</sup> Cambodians were not allowed to perform Buddhist rites under the rule of the Khmer Rouge.<sup>29</sup> There was a staunch belief among the Khmer Rouge leadership that Buddhism was brought to Cambodia by imperialists and that this foreign religion would contaminate the purity and authenticity of the racially superiority of Khmer.<sup>30</sup> In fact, while the Khmer Rouge was not hostile to Buddhism in the first few months of its rule, it soon developed an opposition to Buddhism in response to the Cambodians who saw religious life as the answer to the emotional and material void left

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<sup>23</sup> Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, 243.

<sup>24</sup> Hilton, "Truth, Representation, and the Politics of Memory after Genocide," 62.

<sup>25</sup> Quinn, "The Pattern and Scope of Violence," 187.

<sup>26</sup> Terry Miller and Sean Williams, *The Garland Handbook of Southeast Asian Music* (Milton and Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 60.

<sup>27</sup> Quinn, "The Pattern and Scope of Violence," 188. Terry Miller and Sean Williams, *The Garland Handbook of Southeast Asian Music*, 61. Kent and Chandler, *People of Virtue*, 7. Rebecca Knuth, *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction* (Westport: Praeger Books, 2006), 124.

<sup>28</sup> Quinn, "The Pattern and Scope of Violence," 191.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Harris, *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth Century Asia* (London and New York: Continuum, 1999), 65.

<sup>30</sup> Pouchard, *Cambodia Ground Zero*, 23.

behind by the Khmer Rouge and who began to ordain themselves.<sup>31</sup> The Khmer Rouge found this event disenchanting and considered these religious activities as contrary to the principles of their revolution, and they targeted monks in an attempt to destroy Buddhism in Cambodia.<sup>32</sup> As a result of the Khmer Rouge defrocking of the priesthood, monks had been forced to undertake agricultural work.<sup>33</sup> One of the characteristics of class structure in the old regime was the revered social status given to monks. Therefore, the Khmer Rouge thought that a classless society could be achieved when monks no longer held special reverence in Cambodian society.<sup>34</sup> The people of 'new' Cambodia were asked to no longer keep faith with Buddhism. The social status of Buddhism was also challenged by the Khmer Rouge's order to destroy and vandalise at least 3,000 pagodas to be reconstructed as stables, prisons, and execution sites. Statues of Buddha were decapitated and thrown in ponds or rivers. The Khmer Rouge's ideological reconstruction of Cambodia targeted Buddhism in order to annihilate the memory of religion as a central pillar of the old social system.<sup>35</sup>

Fourthly, the 'new' Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge's rule strengthened the hold of nationalism throughout the country by exterminating other ethnic groups, especially the Vietnamese.<sup>36</sup> Apart from the Vietnamese, the Khmer Rouge leaders struggled to suppress the existence of other nationals; the Chinese, the Laotian, and the Muslim Cham.<sup>37</sup> The Khmer Rouge's uncompromising relationship with Vietnam had led to mass slaughter but importantly it was presented as a purification of the Khmer race.<sup>38</sup> This policy was not unrelated to Pol Pot's individual memory, who as a student in Paris in 1952, had an aspiration

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<sup>31</sup> Evan Gottesman, *Cambodia After the Khmer Rouge: Inside the politics of nation building* (Ann Arbor and Chelsea: Sheridan Books, 2003), 71.

<sup>32</sup> Knuth, *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries*, 131-132.

<sup>33</sup> Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, 263, 265.

<sup>34</sup> Quinn, "The Pattern and Scope of Violence," 191.

<sup>35</sup> Knuth, *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries*, 132.

<sup>36</sup> Ben Kiernan, "Myth, Nationalism and Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3 (2) (2001): 193, 201.

<sup>37</sup> Samuel Totten and William Parsons, *Centuries of Genocide: Essays and Eyewitness Accounts* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 323.

<sup>38</sup> Kiernan, "Myth, Nationalism and Genocide," 193.

to bring the idea of “Original Khmer” to his country.<sup>39</sup> It has been reported that there were large-scale massacres of the regime’s enemies, including at least 100,000 Khmers who sided with Vietnam and who lived near the Cambodia-Vietnam borders in the second half of 1978.<sup>40</sup> It was probable that the Khmer Rouge’s call for racial purification through the unlimited use of violence against minorities related to its leaders’ xenophobia, and their fear that Hanoi would relentlessly plot to take over or ‘swallow’ Cambodia.<sup>41</sup> Due to its deeply-rooted racist and nationalist ideology, the Khmer Rouge transformed itself into a ‘killing machine’ in order to purge pro-Vietnam Cambodians and Vietnamese communities in Cambodia. This traumatic incident is known historically known as the ‘Second Great Purge’ that started in 1978 before this regime that resulted in the deaths of 1.7 million people was toppled by the invasion of Vietnam in January 1979.

After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, Cambodia has- similarly to other Southeast Asian countries- been striving towards liberal democracy.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Cambodia is currently undergoing a transition from authoritarian regime to fully-fledged democracy.<sup>43</sup> As Cambodia was on a path to liberal democracy, a free-market economy, and respect for civil and political liberties, the country has become stuck between outright authoritarianism and fully-fledged democracy; something that Steven Lewitshy and Lucan Way call ‘a hybrid regime.’<sup>44</sup> The hybrid regime in Cambodia since 1997 has tilted towards an entrenched one-party system, led by the Cambodia People’s Party (CPP), dominated by Hun Sen, a former

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<sup>39</sup> Kiernan, “Myth, Nationalism and Genocide,” 194.

<sup>40</sup> Ben Kiernan, *Cambodia: The Eastern Zone Massacres* (New York: Columbia University, 1986), 54.

<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Quinn, “Explaining the Terror,” 249. Karl Jackson, “Cambodia 1978: War, Pillage, and Purge in Democratic Kampuchea,” *Asian Survey* 19 (1) (1979): 83. Ben Kiernan, “New light on the origins of the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 12 (4) (1980): 61.

<sup>42</sup> Mely Caballero-Anthony, *Political Change, Democratic Transitions and Security in Southeast Asia* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> Michael Doyle, *UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia: UNTAC Civil Mandate* (Boulder and Colo: Lynne Rienner, 1995). MacAlister Brown and Joseph Zasloff, *Cambodia Confounds the Peacemakers* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1998). Pierre Lizée, *Peace Power and Resistance in Cambodia: Global Governance and the Failure of International Conflict Resolution* (New York and St. Martin’s Press, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> Steven Lewitsky and Lucan A. Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2) (2002): 53.



officer and a survivor of the Khmer Rouge, who is serving the longest premiership in Southeast Asia.<sup>45</sup> Thomas Carothers points out that “Cambodia’s hybrid democracy is the product of dominant politics whereby the CPP and Hun Sen dominate the system to such an extent that the prospect of a transfer of power in the foreseeable future appears low.”<sup>46</sup> This leads to the CPP’s use of its “domination of the state machinery to moulding the electoral arena, particularly in rural areas, by using intimidation and violence and to link Hun Sen himself and the CPP to the Cambodian electorate through ‘patronage politics.’”<sup>47</sup> Cambodian patronage politics is a form of political clientelism and the transaction between political and citizens whereby material favours are offered in return for political support at the polls.<sup>48</sup> It is argued that Cambodian patronage politics is employed not only as a strategy for inter-party competition but also as part of intra-party power struggles.<sup>49</sup>

Patronage politics permits CPP members to connect with business tycoons and military leaders and allows Hun Sen to remain a dominant figure in Cambodia. For instance, in his attempt to strike a deal with Prince Ranariddh on the formation of a coalition government, Hun Sen humiliated President of the Senate Chea Sim by forcing him to leave the country temporarily, so that Hun Sen could maintain his supremacy.<sup>50</sup> Through patronage politics, Hun Sen has built his own independent power base which affords him a position above party control with personalised networks that permeate and supersede state institutions.<sup>51</sup> Rather than consolidating democracy, “the dominant political parties

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<sup>45</sup> Bridget Welsh and Alex Chang, “Political Change, Youth and Democratic Citizenship in Cambodia and Malaysia”, *Democratic Citizenship and Voices of Asia’s Youth*, Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica (IPSAS), Conference Room A, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, North, Building for Humanities and Social Sciences, 20-21 September (2012), p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transitional Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (1) (2002), 11-12.

<sup>47</sup> Leonard Wantchekon, “Clientelism and Voting Behaviour: Evidence from a Field Experience in Benin,” *World Politics* 55 (3) (2003), 400.

<sup>48</sup> Khean Un, “Patronage Politics and Hybrid Democracy: Political Change in Cambodia, 1993-2003,” *Asian Perspective* 29 (2) (2005), 209-210.

<sup>49</sup> Un, “Patronage Politics and Hybrid Democracy,” 221.

<sup>50</sup> Un, “Patronage Politics and Hybrid Democracy,” 218-219.

<sup>51</sup> Un, “Patronage Politics and Hybrid Democracy,” 219.

consolidate their power with patronage, and use the funds from economic development to shore up their political positions, this has contributed to the strengthening of the CPP.”<sup>52</sup> The patronage politics that have emerged in Cambodia, and particularly the links between state-led development, the political control of state resources, the alliance with private sector business cronies, and the use of natural resources for maintaining political power and for personal gain, has resulted in widespread corruption within the CPP.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, there has allegedly been corruption<sup>54</sup> that involved party and government officials, business people, and rural voters.<sup>55</sup> Politicians and political parties need money to sponsor various projects to attract voters and in some cases buy votes directly from the electorate.<sup>56</sup> It can be argued that the pattern of the state patronage supported by influential business entrepreneurs has continued as a prevalent mode of governance in contemporary Cambodian politics.<sup>57</sup>

As Cambodia is moving towards democracy and liberalisation, patronage politics is a hindrance to the country’s true democratisation,<sup>58</sup> and very few Cambodians have brought up the memory of the Khmer Rouge. The necessity of maintaining relations of patronage for the sake of government’s business or economic interest suggests why authoritarianism remains the principal mode of governance among Cambodia’s ruling elite and the lack of restraint placed upon state violence.<sup>59</sup> State violence carried out to further neoliberalisation continues to be a crucial underlying cause of the Cambodian government’s tendency toward authoritarianism, hybrid democracy, and the failure to separate public and private economic

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<sup>52</sup> Welsh and Chang, “Political Change, Youth and Democratic Citizenship in Cambodia and Malaysia,” 2-3.

<sup>53</sup> Welsh and Chang, “Political Change, Youth and Democratic Citizenship in Cambodia and Malaysia,” 3.

<sup>54</sup> Jon Moran, “Patterns of Corruption and Development in East Asia,” *Third World Quarterly* 20 (3) (1999): 569-587.

<sup>55</sup> Un, “Patronage Politics and Hybrid Democracy,” 223-224.

<sup>56</sup> Clark Neher, “Thailand’s Political as Usual,” *Current History* 94 (596) (December): 435-439.

<sup>57</sup> Un, “Patronage Politics and Hybrid Democracy,” 224.

<sup>58</sup> Simon Springer, *Cambodia’s Neoliberal Order: Violence, Authoritarianism, and the contestation of public space* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2010), 3-4.

<sup>59</sup> Springer, *Cambodia’s Neoliberal Order*, 2.

interests.<sup>60</sup> Simon Springer argues that “in the Cambodian context, such lack of democratic accountability has meant that the poor have had to contend with recurrent economic crises.”<sup>61</sup> Following the efforts of the UNTAC peacekeeping mission, Cambodia has continued to be governed by state sponsored-violence, patronage politics, and hybrid democracy presided over by the CPP. This issue is underscored by Springer when he argues that:

The realities of Cambodian political life are far from democratic, open, fair, and just the neoliberalisation has done little to change this situation, but such political economic reform has actually exacerbated conditions of authoritarianism in Cambodia. It is argued that ‘order’ preserves an economic system that serves to maintain the power and privilege of indigenous elites at the expense of the poor, which in turn entrenched patron-client relations as the elite are positioned to informally control markets and material rewards.<sup>62</sup>

Although the CPP does not employ extreme violence against the population in the same way as the Khmer Rouge, the CPP does not seriously work towards promoting liberal democracy either.<sup>63</sup> Key government institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Defence continue to run unchecked.<sup>64</sup> Since the monarchy of Prince Sihanouk, no Cambodian political regime has sought to hold free and fair elections. Political rights and civil liberties have been suppressed and state leaders have adopted a strategy of pre-emptive violence to gain and consolidate power.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps, we can follow

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<sup>60</sup> Springer, *Cambodia's Neoliberal Order*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> Springer, *Cambodia's Neoliberal Order*, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Springer, *Cambodia's Neoliberal Order*, 6.

<sup>63</sup> Sorpong Peou, *Intervention and Change in Cambodia: Towards Democracy?* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 66-67.

<sup>64</sup> Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Cambodia: The Justice System and Violations of Human Rights (1992)*, 37.

<sup>65</sup> Peou, *Intervention and Change in Cambodia*, 70.

Margaret Slocomb who suggests that all Cambodian political regimes both past and present have not lived up to the principles of democracy.<sup>66</sup> For instance, in July 2015, Cambodia's parliament passed a controversial law regulating the activities of Cambodian nongovernmental organisations with unanimous approval by ruling-party lawmakers, amid a boycott by the opposition and protestors.<sup>67</sup> It can be said that since the end of Khmer Rouge, one of the most important variables that impedes democratisation is the CPP's intention to hinder Cambodia's transition to democracy. Sorpong Peou suggests that since the 1997 coup against Norodom Ranariddh, the co-prime minister of the Royalist FUNCINPEC (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia), the country has since experienced democratic stagnation and is moving towards the monopolisation of power by the CPP.<sup>68</sup> The system of checks and balances in Cambodia does not really work well because of the CPP's intervention, and has allowed for the increasing authoritarian power of the CPP, as the new state, political, and civil society institutions that emerged after the 1993 elections were subsequently rendered weak and ineffective by the ruling elite's continuing personal power. This has led to the consolidation of the CPP's political power, and as a consequence "[t]he best that Cambodia can currently hope for is political stability rather than democratic consolidation as there is no incentive for the political elite to strengthen the institutions at the expense of curtailing personal power."<sup>69</sup> Overall, contemporary politics in Cambodia are shaped by attempts for modernisation and economic-liberalisation, but the progress of these are hampered by inequality, corruption, strongman political control and historical legacies of authoritarianism. Hun Sen, operating through

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<sup>66</sup> Margaret Slocomb, "The Nature and Role of Ideology in the Modern Cambodian State," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37 (3) (2006): 375-395.

<sup>67</sup> Radio Free Asia, "Cambodian Parliament Passes Restrictive Draft Law on NGOs," accessed July 27, 2015. <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/parliament-passes-restrictive-draft-law-on-ngos-07132015162455.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Keakthina Chau-Pech Ollier and Tim Winter, *Expressions of Cambodia: The Politics of Tradition, Identity, and Change* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

<sup>69</sup> Sorpong Peou, "The Challenge for Democratic Consolidation in Post-War Societies: The Cambodian Experience", 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop on Political Transition and Political Change in Southeast Asia, Traders Hotel Singapore 28-29 August 2006, 9-10.

patronage politics, has the advantage of control over his party that leaves him able to determine any political environment and economic opportunities,<sup>70</sup> leading to illiberal democracy, corruption, and a lack of genuine political participation.<sup>71</sup>

To recap the argument of this section, I have suggested that the rise of the Khmer Rouge went hand-in-hand with enforced ‘forgetting’ of the old regime. The fall of the Khmer Rouge led to the concentration of power under the CPP. Under the rule of the CPP and the premiership of Hun Sen, Cambodia is a country that has been characterised as a ‘hybrid democracy’ and scholars have identified widespread problems with corruption. The use of violence against people has also been a factor that has discouraged Cambodian protestors from promoting liberal democracy in the country. Nonetheless, I observe that during a time in which most of the Cambodian are struggling with their living conditions under neo-liberalism and with hopes for political reform concentrated around the promotion of liberal democracy in the country, only a minority of people have talked about the memory of past state crimes. It is as if the current trajectory of neo-liberalism and the necessity of people to survive within neo-liberalism has compelled them to forget the history of violence in a natural way. In the next section, I will pay attention to survivors from the Khmer Rouge regime who have brought memory back into the present and have used that painful memory to justify their political movement in favour of regime change.

### **The Use of Memory: Bringing Memory Back in to the Present**

In this section, the chapter proceeds by taking the politics of Cambodian survivors into account. This section argues that there are some survivors who have been playing a key

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<sup>70</sup> Welsh and Chang, “Political Change, Youth and Democratic Citizenship in Cambodia and Malaysia,” 3.

<sup>71</sup> Kheang Un, “Cambodia: Moving away from democracy,” *International Political Science Review* 32 (5) (2011): 546-562.

role in trying to transform the current political regime and to protest the current government of Hun Sen. Similar to the case of Vietnam, by bringing the memory of the Khmer Rouge back into the present, those survivors protesting against Hun Sen have used a painful memory in order to justify and rationalise their political movement. However, it should be noted that not every survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime is interested in transforming the current regime. In fact, some survivors of the Khmer Rouge such as Sok An, Sar Kheng, Keat Chhon, and Hor Namhong have been serving in privileged positions in Prime Minister Hun Sen's cabinet since the 1990s and they have opposed the survivor's political movement as it could eventually lead to the collapse of their premiership. Thus, on the one hand, I suggest (which may be subject to challenge) the term 'pro-democracy survivors' to refer to survivors who have devoted their political life to promote regime change and to claim to elevate the living standard of the whole country. On the other, there are also some 'privileged survivors' who have repudiated the value of democracy promoted by the former, and most of whom, believe that democracy must be promoted within the existing framework of state authority.

To begin with, the rise of the Khmer Rouge is one of the crucial events in the history of Cambodia and the destruction caused by the regime motivates survivors to rebuild the country from scratch. Many surviving members and officials of the Khmer Rouge hold significant positions in the Hun Sen cabinet. 'Privileged survivors' include Sok An, who currently holds the position of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Office of the Council of Ministers, and who is actively promoting the 'one village on product' campaign."<sup>72</sup> Sar Kheng, the Deputy Prime Minister and co-Minister for the Ministry of Interior, who escaped and went into the forest to join the resistance against the Khmer Rouge in 1977, accepts that the civil war in Cambodia was an inspiration for him to become involved in politics and serve his country, and now Kheng holds authority at the provincial,

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Bartrop and Jacobs Steven, *Modern genocide: the definitive resource and document collection* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2015), 541.

district, and commune level.<sup>73</sup> Sun Chanthol, the Minister of Commerce, lost his parents to the Khmer Rouge and, motivated by being a witness to trauma, aims to rebuild the suffering country.<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, Keat Chhon, formerly of the Khmer Rouge,<sup>75</sup> currently serves as the Minister for Economy and Finance. Thong Khon, the Minister of Tourism, who lost his family to the Khmer Rouge,<sup>76</sup> and who admits that the campaign to promote historical tourist-sites such as the Tuol Sleng Museum is the way to educate people (both locals and tourists) about the genocide.<sup>77</sup> Khon emphasises that the government pursues the tourism plan “not as a revenge but to educate the new generation about what the genocide has done to this nation.”<sup>78</sup>

By way of contrast, a message from Yeng Virak, a Khmer Rouge survivor and the Executive Director of the Community Legal Education Centre (CLEC) is indicative of the way that survivors have utilised the trauma of the Khmer Rouge to protest against the government. Recalling the memory of the past in the present allows the survivor to call on the government to enact legal reform and to demand that the government stop the human rights violations embedded in Cambodia’s legal framework. I nonetheless take his message into account as a testimony and understand his testimony as the use of memory to unpick the ideology of the Khmer Rouge and its continuing impact on Hun Sen’s hybrid democracy.

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<sup>73</sup> The Phnom Penh Post, “Sar Kheng: on the job, the trial, crime and politics,” accessed August 01, 2015. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/sar-kheng-job-trial-crime-and-politics>.

<sup>74</sup> Knowledge@Wharton, “Wharton: University of Pennsylvania, ‘Will Cambodia Become the Gateway to ASEAN’s 600 Million Consumers?’,” accessed August 02, 2015. <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/can-cambodia-become-the-gateway-to-aseans-600-million-consumers/>. The Irish Times, “Is this a new dawn for Cambodia?,” accessed August 02, 2015. <http://www.irishtimes.com/business/is-this-a-new-dawn-for-cambodia-1.935624>.

<sup>75</sup> VOA Cambodia, “Keat Chhon Admits Role in Pol Pot Era,” accessed August 02, 2015. <http://www.voacambodia.com/content/a-40-2006-12-13-voa2-90153512/1356546.html>.

<sup>76</sup> The Telegraph, “Roll up to see mass murderer Pol Pot’s ashes for two dollars,” accessed August 02, 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/cambodia/1476157/Roll-up-to-see-mass-murderer-Pol-Pots-ashes-for-two-dollars.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Timothy Wood, *Tracing the Last Breath: Movements in Anlong Veng*, A Thesis Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to Rice University (May: 2009): 290.

<sup>78</sup> Ollier and Vinter, *Expressions of Cambodia*, 183.

As a person survived different regimes and the Khmer Rouge nightmare, I have seen Cambodia throughout its history that has gone through different political systems of ruling the country. Cambodian men and women especially in rural and remote areas of the country are experiencing side effects-negative impacts of globalisation especially when promoting economic growth at all costs. As a result, rights of vulnerable people, the already impoverished men and women have been severely threatened and violated by the rich and powerful interests-abuse of power and malfunctioning rule of law-human rights violation. In response to the contexts and the needs of the communities we serve, CLEC undertakes legal empowerment activities which include: legal awareness, legal training, legal assistance and other capacity development and support for the communities.<sup>79</sup>

Alongside Virak, other pro-democracy survivors such as Prak Sokhany, Chanthou Bua, and Pung Chhiv Kek Galabru have devoted their life to the service of their country by becoming leading members of NGOs and civil society organisations. In the case of Prak Sokhany, survivor of the Khmer Rouge and currently the director of the Cambodian Civil Society Partnership (CCSP), her mission is to engage in peace building and conflict resolution. She claims in one interview that “the deep wounds of the war are impossible to erase. Perhaps we can only come to understand it better.”<sup>80</sup> My interpretation of her testimony is that the memory of war and the encounter with trauma are factors that she uses to justify herself as a peace advocate. Another survivor who shares this attitude is Chanthou Boua, who has not heard from her mother, two sisters, and six brothers since 1977 when they were arrested and perhaps killed by the Khmer Rouge officers.<sup>81</sup> This traumatic event may

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<sup>79</sup> Community Legal Education Center, “Message from the Executive Director,” accessed August 01, 2015. <http://www.clec.org.kh/aboutus.php>.

<sup>80</sup> World People’s Blog, “Prak Sokhany,” accessed July 24, 2015. <http://word.world-citizenship.org/wp-archive/2756>.

<sup>81</sup> New Left Review, “Women in Today’s Cambodia,” accessed August 01, 2015. <https://newleftreview.org/I/131/chanthou-boua-women-in-today-s-cambodia>.



have been a driving force behind Boua's work with international aid agencies such as UNDP, Oxfam America, Church World Service, and the Mennonite Central Committee in the attempt to rebuild the country.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, I suggest that perhaps these pro-democracy survivors have been influenced by the memory of war in their advocacy of the political and social reform of Cambodia.

In addition, the promotion of peace, reconciliation, and conflict resolution in Cambodia has also correlated with religious involvement. As the majority of the Cambodian people are followers of the Theravada Buddhism, there are some Khmer Rouge survivors that devote their lives to propagating Buddhist doctrine. Many believe that Buddhist doctrine will cure the pain of the traumatic incident. The work of Anne Yvonne Guillou precisely identifies Buddhism as "the Khmer popular religious system [that] is instrumental in forging a memory of the dead of the Pol Pot regime and in healing social suffering".<sup>83</sup> For instance, Oddom Van Syvorn was taken together with her mother and younger sisters to the killing fields, but were later able to escape with the help of an anonymous man whom she later found out was killed by Khmer Rouge cadres. Syvorn is currently working as a director of the Dhammayietra Centre Peace and Non-Violence, and aims to propagate the Buddhist doctrine which she believes will help sufferers by curing the pain of the past.<sup>84</sup> In contrast to Syvorn, Chea Vannath, a survivor who was forced to work in a labour camp by the Khmer Rouge, confesses that although Buddhism helps to spiritually 'enlighten' her mind, at the same time the religion gives her a passive personality. Influenced by the memory of the past, Vannath has been serving in the United Nations' Missions for Peace Restoration and Democratic

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<sup>82</sup> Viet Nam Generation Journal & Newsletter, "Development Aid and Democracy in Cambodia," accessed August 01, 2015. [http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML\\_docs/Texts/Scholarly/Boua\\_Development&Democ.html](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Texts/Scholarly/Boua_Development&Democ.html).

<sup>83</sup> Anne Yvonne Guillou, "An alternative memory of the Khmer Rouge genocide: the dead if the mass graves and the land guardian spirits [neak ta]," *South East Asia Research* 2 (20) (2012): 207-226.

<sup>84</sup> World People's Blog, "Oddom Van Syvorn," accessed August 01, 2015. <http://word.world-citizenship.org/wp-archive/1944>.

Advancement. She works tirelessly for peaceful reconciliation and reveals to others how the CPP is a corrupt regime exercising one-party rule in a similar fashion to Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. The survivor who is now serving as President of the Centre for Social Development (CSD) expresses in one testimony that "the impact of civil war changed me...not anymore will I allow one party to lead my country."<sup>85</sup>

Pung Chhiv Kek Galabru, a survivor of the Khmer Rouge, thinks that it is imperative to use memory and remembering to advance regime change in Cambodian national politics.<sup>86</sup> In her testimony, "when I first came back, it was a shock...the city was destroyed...it was nothing like I remembered."<sup>87</sup> This testimony and the act of recalling of memory culminated in the decision to establish the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), a domestic organisation that the Hun Sen government considers as a serious enemy since 1992. Significantly, her organisation is in partnership with the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC). The current president of ADHOC is Thun Saray who, like Galabru, is a survivor of the Khmer Rouge. The American ambassador in Phnom Penh comments on Thun Saray that "Saray was a political prisoner on two separate occasions – including under the Khmer Rouge regime. After his release from prison, the survivor turned his attention to becoming a human rights activist, focussing on basic rights, freedoms, and liberties in Cambodia."<sup>88</sup> In addition to his role as the President of ADHOC, Saray also acts as the President of the Board of Directors of the Committee for Free and Fair Elections (COMFREL). While Saray is serving as the President

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<sup>85</sup> World People's Blog, "Chea Vannath," accessed August 01, 2015. <http://word.world-citizenship.org/wp-archive/1770>.

<sup>86</sup> Tom Fawthrop and Helen Jarvis, *Getting Away With Genocide? Elusive Justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005), 83.

<sup>87</sup> Thomson Reuters Foundation News, "Cambodian campaigner Pung Chhiv Kek fights on despite little progress on rights," accessed August 01, 2015. <http://www.trust.org/item/20140130170416-8wb4f>.

<sup>88</sup> From the Ambassador's Penh, "Thun Saray: Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)," accessed August 01, 2015. <http://blogs.usembassy.gov/todd/thun-saray-cambodian-human-rights-and-development-association-adhoc/>.

of COMFREL, his executive director is Koul Panha, whose father and relatives were killed by the Khmer Rouge when Panha was only eight years old.

COMFREL is that it is an organisation that gains a positive, local responses, with more than 150,000 Cambodians having participated in its various training programmes and workshops. Panha has also been awarded one of six prestigious Ramon Magsaysay 2011 awards for his unremitting work in fighting for a free and fair democratic system in the country.<sup>89</sup> Panha is also the former prisoner of a Khmer Rouge prison, and together with 14 other survivors, helped founding ADHOC in 1991 with the hope of bringing peace and democracy to Cambodia. Therefore, it can be said that the initiative of Saray's ADHOC and Panha's COMFREL are similar to Galabru's LICAHHO, and the three organisations have sought to strengthen democracy in Cambodia since its inception. They have all used a painful memory, and the act of bringing the painful memory into the present, to take part in humanitarian missions in order to rebuild the devastated country and to overthrow the government of Hun Sen. These organisations also share having faced constant retaliation from the government since 1990s.<sup>90</sup> For instance, a senior investigator of ADHOC and a survivor of the Khmer Rouge, Chan Soveth, who lost his parents during the Pol Pot regime<sup>91</sup> claims that ADHOC has been in conflict several times with the government.

ADHOC has been accused of criminal activity based on their support for poor villagers; the organisation is seen as a threat to businessmen, who have a vested interest in the Hun Sen government. The Hun Sen government has a reason to perceive of the presence of ADHOC and others as a threat to business partnerships and political order in the age of

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<sup>89</sup> The Phnom Penh Post, "Activist's long road to find peace," accessed August 01, 2015, <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/lifestyle/activist%E2%80%99s-long-road-find-peace>.

<sup>90</sup> World Wide Movement for Human Rights, "Denunciation of government deadly crackdown on Phnom Penh demonstration," accessed August 01, 2015. <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/asia/cambodia/14443-denunciation-of-government-deadly-crackdown-on-phnom-penh-demonstration>.

<sup>91</sup> The Cambodia Daily, "Human Rights Advocate Chan Soveth Dies," accessed August 01, 2015, <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/longtime-human-rights-advocate-chan-soveth-dies-aged-51-73983/>.

neoliberalism, and therefore, it is necessary to use violence to suppress those threats. When Soveth died at the age of 51, Saray's eulogy stated that "he [Soveth] had a higher commitment and motivation to human rights work, and also he was a very active. A courageous man who dares to protect the victims of human rights violations and also dares to criticise the errors or mistakes by the government people".<sup>92</sup> The survivor has also been realised by International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) as a spokesperson who gives 'a voice to the voiceless' and as a man who "relentlessly fought against human rights violations – from land grabbing and violations of people's and communities' rights to food, water or housing, to extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture, and violations of the rights to free expression and free assembly. His ultimate aim was to see a better Cambodia, where human rights, rule of law and democracy will be upheld, where everyone will be free from fear and want, and where no one will enjoy impunity."<sup>93</sup>

In addition, the attempt of pro-democracy survivors to promote national regime change has not been restricted to the domestic level. It is a campaign that is also widespread among expatriate Cambodians. Similar to Viet Tan that the thesis has argued in the previous chapter, one notorious organisation formed by diasporic Cambodians is Khmer National Liberation Front (KNLF). The organisation is based in Denmark and led by Sam Serey, a Cambodian living in exile. Serey admits that he was a member of the Khmer Rouge and later withdraws his supports of the regime.<sup>94</sup> The thesis recognises Serey as having a survivorship because he endured in violence and torture during the Khmer Rouge, yet remains alive. Specific to the point, the mission of the KNLF is different from the LICADHO, AHHOC, and

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<sup>92</sup> The Cambodia Daily, "Human Rights Advocate Chan Soveth Dies."

<sup>93</sup> Worldwide Movement for Human Rights, "Cambodia and the community of human rights defenders lose a great activist – A Tribute to Chan Soveth," accessed August 01, 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/asia/cambodia/16624-cambodia-and-the-community-of-human-rights-defenders-lose-a-great-activist>.

<sup>94</sup> The Guardian, "Pol Pot's soldiers escape justice for genocide," accessed August 02, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/aug/05/johnaglionby>.

COMFREL because of its alleged use of violence to overthrow the Hun Sen government.<sup>95</sup> Its official website refuses to show faces and identities of members, as KNLFF tries to avoid government's surveillance.<sup>96</sup> Serey frequently travels abroad to lobbying many national leaders in order to put a pressure on the Hun Sen government; the official website features his handshake with Denmark's foreign minister.<sup>97</sup> The KNLFF declares its mission is to free Cambodia from the interference of the communist party of Vietnam and the authoritarian rule of Hun Sen.<sup>98</sup> In October 2014, the Hun Sen government responded by arresting 10 armed men who are suspected members of the KNLFF.<sup>99</sup> This incident reiterates the conflict between government and the (non) civil society. This incident is consistent to what Downie's and Kingbury's observations of the political situation in Cambodia in 2001 that "the [Hun Sen] government demonstrates that it has not embraced respect for human rights, and continues to use violence or military rather than civil means for conflict resolution."<sup>100</sup>

Common among survivors of the Khmer Rouge such as Virak, Galabru, Saray, Vannath, Chanthol, Panha, Serey, has been activity in promoting democracy and rebuilding post-war Cambodia following the destruction of the Khmer Rouge. Based on some of my observations, I will counter the suggestion of one scholar who claims that "Cambodia suffers from a post-holocaust syndrome. The Khmer Rouge massacres left a desperate need for social reconstruction. A massive social capital deficit resulted, and *many survivors face deep psychological burdens that discourage reconstruction*. Like the economies of Eastern Europe, Cambodia is undergoing a post-communist transition to a market economy, begun by

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<sup>95</sup> Radio Free Asia, "Cambodian Police Arrest 10 Over 'Plot to Topple Government,'" Accessed July 27, 2015. <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/embassy-protest-10232014183758.html>.

<sup>96</sup> Khmer National Liberation Front, accessed July 27, 2015. <http://www.knlf.net/>.

<sup>97</sup> Khmer National Liberation Front, accessed July 27, 2015. <http://www.knlf.net/photo/>.

<sup>98</sup> Radio Free Asia, "Cambodian Police Arrest 10 Over 'Plot to Topple Government.'"

<sup>99</sup> The Cambodia Daily, "Judge Questions 10 Dissident Group Members," accessed August 07, 2015. <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/judge-questions-10-dissident-group-members-82329/>.

<sup>100</sup> Sue Downie and Damien Kingbury, "Political Development and the Re-emergence of Civil Society in Cambodia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (1) (2001): 43.

the SOC in 1991 (my italic)”.<sup>101</sup> In my opinion, based on the observations in this chapter, this viewpoint misrepresents the reality of contemporary Cambodia. Apart from this, there is one literature that the author claims represents the ‘inside point of view’ of the American Cambodian.<sup>102</sup> The author recommends that her interviewees should be sympathised with for their survivorship. However, her interviewees are a group of vulnerable persons who show their strength and valour in the face of the ongoing effects of extreme violence.<sup>103</sup> My response to that author is that her work seems to treat survivors as people who have no involvement in politics. In other words, her work seems to depoliticise the lives of survivors while my suggestion is to see how survivors are active in political movement and the way that painful memories are invoked in the present to motivate and legitimate these political actions.

In conclusion, the main argument of this section is that there are two different categories of survivors. On the one hand, there are survivors who have held high positions in the cabinet of Hun Sen since 1990s and are not satisfied with political opposition that may eventually lead to an end of their premierships. On the other, there are survivors who have insisted on recalling traumatic memories of the Khmer Rouge in order to challenge the legitimacy of the Hun Sen government. In other words, the painful memories of those inside the governmental positions give legitimacy to its status. Meanwhile, the painful memories of anti-governmental survivors are invoked to create tensions and antagonisms with the current government, to overthrow and replace it with another one. The use of a traumatic memory is to call into question what this thesis calls Ideological-trauma and to challenge this by revealing a position of Real-trauma. However, the case of Cambodia is also significant as it

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<sup>101</sup> Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Oxfordshire and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 326.

<sup>102</sup> Sucheng Chan and Audrey Kim, *Not Just Victims: Conversations with Cambodian Community Leaders in the United States* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2003), ix.

<sup>103</sup> Chan and Kim, *Not Just Victims*, viii.

is an instance in which survivors are invited to give testimony to the court and testimony has been deemed sufficient evidence to reach a verdict by the court. This case of a testimony in court will be elaborated on further in the next section of this chapter.

### **The Testimony of the Survivor in a Tribunal: Justice and its Discontent**

This section will focus on Cambodian survivors' quest for justice following traumas. Survivors have given testimony as to their traumatic experiences with Khmer Rouge violence. Chum Mey and Vann Nath are two prominent survivors of the S-21 prison whose testimonies have led to a life imprisonment of Kaing Guek Eav (often known by his nickname 'Duch'), the former director of the prison (Tuol Sleng). Some witnesses were killed during the proceedings of the court, however, and it is suspected that the Hun Sen government may be responsible for this mysterious killings of the witnesses. Although Guek Eav was sentenced to 35 years imprisonment, some survivors dispute whether 35 years of imprisonment are sufficient for justice to be done. There is even a debate among survivors about the possibility of charging other Khmer Rouge cadres, who they allege are also responsible for these crimes. This means that while justice is partially granted to Cambodian survivors, many argue that there is more to be done to achieve justice for survivors, relatives, and the dead.

After the restoration of peace in 1990, the priority for post-war Cambodia and the United Nations was to set up the trial proceedings against the Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the mass atrocities during 1975-1979. Hun Sen's party, the CPP, was unwilling to co-ordinate with the trial proceedings, however. Such ambivalence can easily be explained by the fact that 'the most responsible' persons are those currently serving in governmental positions in the Hun Sen cabinet. In other words, those who the thesis has dealt with as privileged survivors are the group most responsible for the massacres and who

are seeking protection from prosecution. However, despite decades of inaction, ‘hybrid courts’ of Cambodian and international justice were established in 2006 under the title ‘Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia’ (ECCC). ECCC is financially supported by more than 35 countries and endorsed by the US government.<sup>104</sup> ECCC has involved more than 30,000 people, including survivors, many of whom have visited the court to witness trial proceedings. On the day of prosecution, millions more have followed proceedings on television or online. In 2012, the case 001 was completed when the court sentenced Kaing Guek Eav, the former director of S-21 prison (Tuol Sleng), to life imprisonment. The court commenced case 002 in early 2011, with the defendants four senior Khmer Rouge leaders: Noun Chea, deputy secretary and better known as ‘brother number two’ (Pol Pot is ‘brother no. 1’); Khieu Samphan, head of state of Democratic Kampuchea; Ieng Sary, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs; and Ieng Thirith, minister of social affairs. However, in the view of CNRP leader, Som Rainsy, the number of people responsible for these crimes is far larger. His viewpoint implicitly suggests that prime minister Hun Sen and other CPP ministers should also be present at the trials. As a Cambodian politician with a robust international network, Rainsy lobbied his supporter, US politician Dana Rohrabacher, for the US congress approval to indict Hun Sen for his genocide and his crimes against humanity.<sup>105</sup> Rainsy, with support from the US politicians and other Cambodian parties such as the ousted FUCINPEC led by Prince Norodom Ranariddh, has tried to bring Hun Sen to the ECCC and wishes him to face the same justice as Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic. In this respect, the trial of the Khmer Rouge’s notorious leaders is not only an attempt to achieve justice, but also illuminates the chronic

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<sup>104</sup> Tom Fawthrop and Helen Jarvis, *Getting Away with Genocide: Elusive Justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2005), 6.

<sup>105</sup> The Phnom Penh Post, “Irresponsible and “baseless” anti-Hun Sen campaign hits US Congress,” accessed August 16, 2015. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/irresponsible-and-baseless-anti-hun-sen-campaign-hits-us-congress>.



tensions between CPP and CNRP or between the pro-Hun Sen and anti-Hun Sen factions, the main faultlines of Cambodia's domestic politics.

Vann Nath, one of the fourteen survivors of the S-21 prison was invited to give a testimony in the international court. As an artist living throughout the Khmer Rouge regime, he was asked by the Khmer Rouge cadres to paint and sculpt portraits of Pol Pot. On June 2009, Vann Nath's testimony was considered by ECCC as substantial evidence for crimes against humanity committed by Kaing Guek Eav, the director of the S-21 prison from 1975-1979 where more than 16,000 persons were tortured and murdered under his command. Vann Nath's testimony, which was institutionally accepted under case 001 by the ECCC as trustworthy, had considerable political effect, since it led to the imprisonment of Guek Eav. Another significant survivor is Chum Mey, whose testimony on Guek Eav's aggression during the Khmer Rouge was accepted as truth by the ECCC and again contributed to Guek Eav's imprisonment. In response to case 001 and case 002, Hun Sen's government attempted to elide survivors' and witnesses' accounts about the deaths of about a third of the population.<sup>106</sup> After the prosecution of Guek Eav and other Khmer Rouge leaders under case 001 and case 002, a key witness named Ta Mok was killed. Various sources have speculated that the CPP is responsible for killing this witness.<sup>107</sup> Ta Mok is a brave and straightforward person whose testimony might harm those CPP leaders who are also former Khmer Rouge cadres. It has been suggested that Ta Mok's killing was due to the government's anxiety over Ta Mok's courageous testimony, and an attempt to prevent the survivor's presence in the court and to undercut the opportunity for the survivor to give testimony. However, there are

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<sup>106</sup> Susan Cook, *Genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda: New Perspectives* (New Brunswick and New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009).

<sup>107</sup> VOA Cambodia, "Anti-Hun Sen Leaflets Criticized Hun Sen on Tamok's Death," accessed August 16, 2015. <http://www.voacambodia.com/content/a-40-2006-08-02-voa2-90153137/1355915.html>. The British Broadcasting Corporation, "Khmer Rouge 'butcher' Ta Mok Dies," accessed August 15, 2015. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/5201770.stm>. The Guardian, "Butcher of Cambodia set to expose Thatcher's role," accessed August 15, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/jan/09/cambodia>. The Phnom Penh Post, "Ta Mok: mourned by hundreds, feared by millions," accessed August 15, 2015. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/ta-mok-mourned-hundreds-feared-millions>.

responses from some victims who perceive that the case 001 and the case 002 have not brought authentic justice to *all* victims and survivors. In some victims' perspectives, the ECCC's prosecution simply focuses on high level officers within the Khmer Rouge, despite the fact that those responsible for the physical acts of torture and the deaths of 1.7 million are the middle to low level officers. Significantly, attempts have been made by the Hun Sen government to defend some ministers who secretly had political involvement with the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979. This information was published online by a group of Cambodian cyber activists, who run a blog called 'khmerization'.<sup>108</sup> The group revealed that Hor Nam Hong, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, was not only involved with the Khmer Rouge, but also responsible for violence and torture of fellow-prisoners in 1977.

Although Nam Hong denies every charge against him, the cyber activists insist that Nam Hong made a secret contact with officers in the Khmer Rouge, by becoming part of a network of torture in return for his release from prison. As yet the government has not responded to calls for Nam Hong to face trial for his involvement in criminal acts. In parallel with the CPP's protection of Nam Hong, following the death of cabinet member Chea Sim, in June 2015, many called for him to be placed on trial posthumously for his involvement with the Khmer Rouge. It is alleged that Chea Sim had been employed as a Khmer Rouge cadre, exercising unconstrained violence against innocent people during 1970. As Chea Sim was a close colleague of Hun Sen, even after his death, he has been protected from the ECCC by the CPP.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Khmerization, "WikiLeaks: FM Hor Namhong protested US claim of his involvements with Khmer Rouge crimes," accessed August 01, 2015. <http://khmerization.blogspot.co.uk/2011/07/wikileaks-fm-hor-namhong-protested-us.html>. The Cambodia Daily, "Hor Namhong Denounces Claims Over His Role During KR Regime," accessed August 01, 2015. <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/archives/hor-namhong-denounces-claims-over-his-role-during-kr-regime-2830/>. The Phnom Penh Post, "Witness recounts life at Khmer Rouge prison centre," accessed August 01, 2015. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/witness-recounts-life-khmer-rouge-prison-centre>.

<sup>109</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: Chea Sim Death Shows Failings of Khmer Rouge Court," accessed August 02, 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/08/cambodia-chea-sim-death-shows-failings-khmer->

While the government's response to the demands of the ECCC have resulted in the mysterious killings of a witness and their denial of political involvement with the Khmer Rouge (e.g. Nam Hong and Chea Sim), victims' and perhaps all survivors' responses to the ECCC may comprise of at least these two perspectives. Firstly, there are many survivors who believe that the justice has been fulfilled by the court's decision to sentence Guek Eav to 35 years' imprisonment. Secondly, there are some survivors who cannot agree with only 35 years' imprisonment for Guek Eav, and demand that more Khmer Rouge leaders be present at the trials. I sympathise with this second perspective and in this thesis, I argue that 35 years' imprisonment for Guek Eav does not mean that justice has been entirely fulfilled in Cambodia. Many argue that Guek Eav receives very good treatment during his imprisonment such as three hand-delivered meals a day; living in air-conditioned cells; and sleeping on actual beds with mattresses.<sup>110</sup> The treatment of Guek Eav in prison is different from the conditions over which he presided in S-21, in which former detainees, nowadays the survivors, had to endure between 1975 and 1979. In response to Guek Eav's imprisonment, I find a remark made by Bou Meng, a Khmer Rouge survivor, intriguing. He said "I am extremely envious of Duch and the treatment he receives. I do not understand why the court treats him so well, much better than me (his time at the S-21)."<sup>111</sup> To be more specific about case 001, the ECCC judges, most of them Cambodians, eventually decide to reduce Guek Eav's imprisonment from 35 to 19 years (a) because Guek Eav had already spent some time in jail (b) because of his good cooperation and behaviour (c) because Guek Eav still has more detention in a military jail.<sup>112</sup>

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rouge-court. The Wall Street Journal, "Cambodia's Chea Sim, Top Official in Post-Khmer Rouge Era, Dies at 82," accessed August 02, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/cambodias-cha-sim-top-official-in-post-khmer-rouge-era-dies-at-82-1433768280>.

<sup>110</sup> World Affairs, "Justice Squandered: Cambodia's Khmer Rouge Tribunal," accessed August 01, 2015. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/justice-squandered-cambodia%E2%80%99s-khmer-rouge-tribunal>.

<sup>111</sup> World Affairs, "Justice Squandered."

<sup>112</sup> World Affairs, "Justice Squandered."

It is suggested through the case 001 that the attempt to achieve justice for Khmer Rouge survivors have produced its own problems. The absolute autonomy of the court has been questioned given the suspicion that the court constantly faces political intervention from Hun Sen and his party. The CPP may consider the ECCC a political infringement of Cambodia's sovereignty. Besides the political interference of the CPP in the affairs of the ECCC, the Cambodian judges that Hun Sen appointed to the ECCC have developed a reputation for accepting bribes in exchange for verdicts. This means that the Cambodian judges serving on the ECCC have vested interests in the proceedings. Rather than concerning themselves primarily with justice, it may be the case that many of the ECCC judges wish to make money out of the court system; and it is believed that some judges have even vowed to quit their jobs if the court and the CPP fail to pay them. As the ECCC could not be effective without judges, this raises a particular concern as to whether the CPP wishes to see the dissolution of the ECCC given the unpaid judges, even if the result seems appalling to the Khmer Rouge survivor's quest for justice.

In addition to the motive for corruption within the ECCC,<sup>113</sup> case 002 appears to encounter a setback in fulfilling justice due to the defendant's excuses for not presenting themselves in the court. Ieng Thirith, a defendant in case 002 and a prominent minister under Pol Pot, demanded not to appear in court. She had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, which was given as a reason for her absence and her inability to give testimony in court. In March 2013, Ieng Sary, Thirith's husband and former minister of foreign affairs under Pol Pot, died because of heart failure at the age 87. As a result, there remained only two remaining defendants, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan; both of whom were in very poor physical condition. As long as defendants are unable to provide testimony to the courtroom for case 002, and given the poor physical condition of the two remaining defendants, such

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<sup>113</sup> The Diplomat, "Can Khmer Rouge Survivors Get Justice," accessed August 01, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/can-khmer-rouge-survivors-get-justice/>.

incidents continue to be seen as an obstacle to the survivors' quest for justice. Furthermore, obstruction of the court by the CPP has led to the resignation of international judges, notably, the Swiss Laurent Kasper-Ansermet and the German Siegfried Blunk. Interference from the CPP is due to the judges' attempts in bringing the two new cases, case 003 and case 004, to the tribunal.<sup>114</sup> Since these attempts, Hun Sen's government has opposed the ECCC's trial proceedings by all means possible, even proving reluctant to further investigation of cases 003 and 004.<sup>115</sup> In response, Ou Virak, a Khmer Rouge survivor whose father was murdered by the Khmer Rouge cadre, and currently president of the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights and ASEAN Human Rights Body, expressed a negative view to the ECCC.<sup>116</sup> It is possible that given the corruption of the ECCC, the death of the privileged survivors, and the absence of defendants from the trial proceedings due to illness, the survivor has no confidence in the ECCC's capacity to achieve justice for all survivors. Kek Galabru expressed a similar viewpoint when telling *The Guardian* that the government of Hun Sen has lacked the determination to give the ECCC autonomy since the establishment of the tribunal, despite the government having no more excuses for delays to proceedings.<sup>117</sup>

To conclude this section, I wish to address Khmer Rouge survivors' quest for justice for their traumatic experience. Chum Mey and Vann Nath are two prominent survivors who are asked to provide testimonies to the court and their testimonies were robust and successful in convicting Guek Eav of his crimes. But this justice is not without discontents because there is a dispute among survivors whether placing total responsibility on Guek Eav is just. Many demand that the court summon other defendants to appear, but this demand has been

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<sup>114</sup> The British Broadcasting Corporation, "Judge quits Cambodian UN-backed Khmer Rouge trial," accessed August 14, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-17432484>.

<sup>115</sup> The British Broadcasting Corporation, "Judge quits Cambodian UN-backed Khmer Rouge trial."

<sup>116</sup> World Affair, "Justice Squandered."

<sup>117</sup> Global Policy Forum, "Khmer Rouge to Face UN Tribunal," accessed August 01, 2015. <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/163/28898.html>.

set back by the Hun Sen government. Thus, justice for the survivors has been fulfilled to some extent but more needs to be done for justice to truly be attained.

## **Reflecting the Case Study**

This section critically reflects on the main issues discussed in this chapter and conduct an analyses through Lacanian psychoanalysis and a Žižekian political outlook so as to test the theoretical framework outlined in the opening chapter of this thesis. There are three chief points for consideration. The first is central to Žižek's notion of post-politics, the conceptual analysis which offers a continuity to the official memory. The challenge to post-politics comes from the opposite direction, uncovering the Real-trauma in relation to the use of traumatic memory that aims to disintegrate official memory and post-politics. The second point puts *jouissance* under analysis. While post-politics seeks to suppress and deal with *jouissance*, the retrieval of *jouissance* in hostility to post-politics serves a foundation of violence. Post-politics in its suppression of *jouissance* leads to what I highlight for the politics of survivors as Ideological-trauma while the retrieval of *jouissance* is the 'Real-trauma'. The third point highlights the lack of language to represent trauma. Yet, the lack of language to represent trauma constitutes the formation of subjectivity of survivors.

First, in the theory chapter, I outline Žižek's analysis of 'post-politics', in which contemporary politics becomes a matter of social and political administration managed by technocrats such as economists, political advisors, capitalists, and specialists in public opinion.<sup>118</sup> Žižek argues that post-politics has replaced political conflict rooted in differences of ideology such as liberalism and communism, as well as liberal democracy and totalitarianism. Far from emphasising ideological conflicts such as those of the Cold War, the

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<sup>118</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 198.

post-politics that has emerged alongside the New World Order presupposes the abilities of political and social specialists such as American political experts, the President of the United States, and European foreign policy advisors, who claim that they are able to manage needs and demands for the rest of the world.<sup>119</sup> In the present, when conflict in terms of political ideology is not as prominent as it was during the Cold War, effective political administration lies in the capabilities of western experts to manage life and (bio-politically) erase people's fear and anxiety, leading to the implementation of global policy emanated from the west in the form of anti-terrorism, anti-immigration, anti-environmental degradation, anti-Chinese economy, anti-poverty, humanitarian intervention, and so on.<sup>120</sup>

However, Žižek contends that post-politics is a false imaginary because it seems to conceal an antagonism inherent in the very core of political and social experience.<sup>121</sup> Post-politics is problematic because it has attempted to establish a universal hegemony.<sup>122</sup> Post-politics is based upon the problematic assertion that everything remains constant, harmonious, and intact because it is manageable and controllable under close supervision of (western) experts. Such politics performed under the paradigm of post-politics is thus problematic because it fails to identify with the Real, trauma which is inherent in the society. In this sense, it can be argued that post-politics operates according to what Lacanian psychoanalysis calls 'a function of fantasy' and as the object cause of desire (*object petit a*). Post-politics is a fantasy function and the cause of desire because social and political administration is relative to the Will of the State<sup>123</sup>; that is, every state's matter is desirable because it is governable, disciplined, and (biopolitically) controllable under the auspices of a central party. Such fantasy that generates a desirable or pleasurable state and society is misleading because it is

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<sup>119</sup> Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 204.

<sup>120</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008), 40-46.

<sup>121</sup> Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 181.

<sup>122</sup> Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 175-176.

<sup>123</sup> Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 177.

the misleading signifier. It does not signify the social antagonism which is termed by Lacan as ‘the traumatic-Real’. Therefore, it is invoked by Žižek and other leftist theorists such as Ernesto Laclau to the impossibility of filling in ‘the gap’ between post-political rationality and the traumatic-Real antagonism.<sup>124</sup> For Žižek, this is the gap that separates post-politics from the repressive content, the traumatic-Real; something that urges us to cross fantasy and at the same time abolishing the hegemonic position of post-politics.<sup>125</sup>

This tension between hegemonic rationality of post-politics and the repressive content of the traumatic Real is applicable to the politics of survivors in Cambodia in the post-Khmer Rouge era. This chapter has argued that since taking over political power from the Khmer Rouge, the CPP has regarded itself as a party capable of handling every matter in the country. This is demonstrated by the fact that the CPP has comprised of many prominent social and political experts such as President Hun Sen, Hor Nam Hong, Sok An, Sar Kheng, Sun Chanthol, Kieth Meng, and others. These Cambodian political experts are ‘privileged survivors’ of the Khmer Rouge, who are no longer interested in conflict in terms of political ideology (e.g. East VS West, democracy VS communism) in the same way that conflict was understood during the Khmer Rouge’s reign. Instead, under the logic of post-politics, those ‘privileged survivors’, who have currently held a position of the political experts, are interested in managing the country and in (bio-politically) administrating the nation in the aftermath of the trauma of the Khmer Rouge. If *Angka* is the Khmer Rouge’s Will of the State in the past, the CPP has now replaced it as the Will of the Cambodian State after the Khmer Rouge was removed from power. In a paradigm of post-politics, the one-party system controlled by the CPP enables those experts to respond to the significant demands and requests of the Cambodian people. However, the CPP’s total administration is the signifier that misleads Cambodians. The Real shows itself up through the survivors who challenge the

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<sup>124</sup> Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 177.

<sup>125</sup> Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 180-181.



CCP by trying to bring back memory of the traumatic incident into the present such as the leaders of COMFREL, ADHOC, LICADHO, KNLF. Thus, the hegemonic rationality of the CPP is incomplete. There is a gap between hegemonic rationality and antagonism to it, exercised in particular by anti-government groups in Cambodia. To bring back the traumatic memory into the present is one of the ways to traverse the fantasy. This eventually leads to the disillusionment of the CPP's hegemonic position, revealing the trauma of social antagonism in Cambodian politics.

Second, Žižek argues that reality is able to function smoothly only insofar as it is able to erase and repress *jouissance* (a surplus enjoyment). In other words, social reality that is constantly normal is conditioned by the deletion of *jouissance* from reality.<sup>126</sup> Reality is therefore the 'not-all'. Žižek suggests that when *jouissance* begins to register or enter into reality, this may result in the 'de-realisation' of reality itself.<sup>127</sup> But it is only by encountering *jouissance* or the Real in which reality is formed as a lack and the *jouissance* that emerges is a crucial step by which reality begins to deal with its own lack. Žižek continues that encountering *jouissance* or encountering the Real is a condition in which violence can emerge against a false reality.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, there is a gap that shows conflict between a false imaginary, given the function of reality that erases *jouissance*, and an encounter with the traumatic-Real that retrieves *jouissance* in order to acquire a proper reality. A brief encounter with the traumatic-Real or *jouissance* is something that can subvert false consciousness and renew our perception to that fallacious reality.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, Žižek argues that the essence of post-politics is more about the politics of managing *jouissance*; a

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<sup>126</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 76.

<sup>127</sup> Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, 76.

<sup>128</sup> Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, 76.

<sup>129</sup> Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, 78.

focus is on how to manage and regulate *jouissance*.<sup>130</sup> Following Žižek, the thesis argues by referring to the Ideological-trauma and the Real-trauma as mentioned in Chapter 1 that a tactic employed by the post-political strategy is to manage the ‘not-all’ reality by means of emphasising the trauma that sustains the ideology of the sovereign state, and by negating the Real-trauma that opposes it. However, it is suggested that the entry of the Real-trauma as an intervention into the Ideological-trauma not only disturbs the false consciousness of reality, but it is also seen as the origin of violence.

To apply this discussion to the case of Cambodia, it can be argued that the entry of the Real or *jouissance* as leading to violence is another aspect that we crucially cannot ignore. This outlook can be assessed in the case of Cambodia in at least in two places. First, it can be argued that survivors can create violence by disrupting the sovereign state. This is evident in the case of Chum Mey and Vann Nath who both gave testimony at the ECCC. Their testimonies lead to the imprisonment of the former director of Pol Pot’s secret prison (S-21), Guek Eav, for 35 years. Although the testimonies of survivors that culminate in the punishment of their perpetrators may generate *jouissances* for survivors and, with that, lead to a renewal of our sense of reality, there are political repercussions and a violent response on the part of the Hun Sen government. The mysterious killing of Ta Mok, for instance, has led some Cambodians to conclude that the Hun Sen government is probably behind the killing of this significant witness. This is one of the scenarios that reflects Žižek’s argument that *jouissance* is a condition for the origin of violence.

Chum Mey and Vann Nath are survivors whose testimonies have opposed and disrupted the legitimacy of the Hun Sen government. Their narratives and testimonies have disrupted the official memory of the Khmer Rouge on the one hand, and broken the silence of Hun Sen’s ignorance of the history of the Khmer Rouge on the other. Forgetting the history

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<sup>130</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge and Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2006), 309.

of the Khmer Rouge has been a collective political action on the part of CPP members who have chosen to no longer discuss the incidents of the ‘killing field’. This is evident in the case of Nam Hong who denies charges against him that he is one of the former Khmer Rouge cadres, and that he had killed innocent people during the Khmer Rouge years. In addition, memory of the Khmer Rouge years seems to have been used in a particular way by members of the Hun Sen government such as Sun Chanthol, Sok An, Sar Kheng, and Keat Chhon. They have used memories of the Khmer Rouge to declare that it is vital to be reminded of this devastating time in history in order to move on and to develop all aspects of the country. Thus, this way of using memories of the Khmer Rouge creates a division between those who have used a memory in order to overthrow the government and those who have used it to remain in power. The latter is the ‘Ideological-trauma’, a trauma that integrates with the government’s discourse while the former is the ‘Real-trauma, a trauma that aims at disrupting the presence of the governmental power and a trauma that embodies Žižek’s idea of ultrapolitics.

Third, a Lacanian perspective suggests that the violence of the Khmer Rouge lacks the language to represent it as part of a narrative. The Khmer Rouge’s violence is the Real. Since it is the Real, the atrocity is “presented as the ultimate traumatic point where objectifying historical knowledge breaks down,”<sup>131</sup> which means that the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge is “the violence [that] is referred to as a mystery, the heart of darkness of our civilization; its enigma negates all (explanatory) answers in advance, defying knowledge and description, noncommunicable, lying outside historisation – it cannot be explained, visualised, represented, transmitted, since it marks the Void, the black hole, the end, the implosion, of the (narrative) universe.”<sup>132</sup> There is no possibility for language able to universally narrate,

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<sup>131</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism: Five Interventions in the (Mis)Use of a Notion* (London and New York: Verso, 2001), 66.

<sup>132</sup> Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism*, 66-67.

represent, mediate, and visualise the enigmatic Real of the atrocity. Khmer Rouge violence is the Real and defies what Žižek calls ‘the objectifying knowledge’. However, as this thesis hopes to demonstrate, the attempt to narrate and possess such enigmatic knowledge is a condition for the formation of survivors’ subjectivity. Although a traumatic condition cannot be mediated by language, attempts by survivors to represent, regulate, politicise, and express the Real is a crucial condition for the formation of survivors’ subjectivity in four senses.

In the first sense, it can be argued that the Khmer Rouge atrocity is the Real that is regulated and managed by the Hun Sen government according to post-political rationality of administration. The history of Khmer Rouge violence is the enigmatic Real because the privileged survivor, or those working for the Hun Sen government in the present, aims to cast it aside. Privileged survivors are existentially possible only insofar as they are able to regulate, manage, ‘silence’, and negate the Real. In short, privileged survivors form their subjectivities through the regulation and suppression of the Real. In the second sense, a refusal to talk about the Real does not mean that the Real entirely disappears. The Real has been translated and used by survivors as a crucial factor justifying involvement with NGOs and protest against the Hun Sen government’s culture of authoritarianism. This means that pro-democracy survivors form their subjectivities using painful memories and to some extent recalling traumatic incidents for political advantage such as national regime change. However, in the third sense, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the object of desire is also known as the *object petit a*.<sup>133</sup> As the enigmatic Real cannot be mediated through language, what one needs to fill in the gap for this lost object of desire is to replace it with the stand-in and the substitutive object. The *object petit a* crucially serves as a function of the stand-in object and serves as an object cause of desire to which this stand-in object must maintain its consistency.<sup>134</sup> Then, the narrative of some survivors in the midst of their protests against the government not only

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<sup>133</sup> Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism*, 151.

<sup>134</sup> Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism*, 147, 151.

reflects the use of a traumatic memory, but does also serves as a stand-in for the (inaccessible) Real. Therefore, it can be said that survivors have formed their subjectivities in relation to political activism based on narratives and testimonies which have served as an *object petit a*; a stand-in object to the Real. In the fourth sense, there are survivors who are required to show a presence at the ECCC where their testimonies have culminated in the punishment of former aggressors. Their testimonies are not and can never be the Real. However, those testimonies are officially accepted or institutionally endorsed as truth by the court. Although the testimony is not the Real, it is officially endorsed as if it is the Real otherwise there will be insufficient evidence for penalties against the aggressor. In this sense, some survivors such as Chum Mey and Vann Nath have formed their subjectivities by giving the testimony in the court and their subjectivities in relation to their testimonies are institutionally accepted as the Real.

In brief, while post-politics performs itself as the reality without a lack and equally as the continuation of official memory, *jouissance* works on behalf of survivors resisting the continuity of the official memory. The government, with their belief in a country under the control of experts, responds by suppressing those threats. This is a reflection of the uncompromising stance between Ideological-trauma, a trauma which is constituted in the government's official narrative, and the Real trauma that aims to resist the former. Although there is the impossibility of language to represent the traumatic incident, survivors have used their representation of trauma as a way of forming their subjectivities within the symbolic order. For instance, the act of incorporating trauma in testimony is to make that testimony the object of desire, *the object petit a*, that stands as a substitution for the Real; the impossibility of access. Yet, in the case of Cambodia, this *object petit a* leads to the formation of subjectivities of survivors in four senses. First, as a way to maintain a governmental position. Second, as a way to make survivors activists capable of mobilise

others in the interests of regime change. Third, as a way to make others to believe that testimony is accurate while it is impossible to prove the truth of a traumatic incident; a testimony is a replacement of the Real. Fourth, as the only way for the law to gather evidence from witnesses to punish aggressors. To put it in terms of Žižek's ultrapolitics, it is impossible for survivors as bearers of trauma to reach consensus about the politics of memory. Ultrapolitics rather suggests that we should embrace antagonism and conflict between memories. The politics of memory should acknowledge this character of memory and the politics that stem from it: a form of politics diametrically opposed to post-politics.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter has been to highlight the politics of Cambodian survivors following the civil war. The Vietnam chapter underscored the practice of aesthetics and the use of testimony by survivors in the service of political activism. The chapter on Cambodia adds to the Vietnam chapter by distinguishing between two categories of survivors. The first category is the privileged survivor, which highlights survivors who have taken the position of the government and who have promoted the official memory. The official memory is not unable to incorporate trauma: indeed, official memory equates to what this thesis calls Ideological-trauma. Meanwhile, the second category of survivor refers to anti-government survivors who have insisted on the necessity of regime change. The survivor of the first category is aware of the existence of the second category and in dealing with this anxiety reacts by resorting to violent means in order to suppress them. The survivor of the first category, notably the government, is anxious about political movement of the second that may result in the destruction of their status and position in contemporary Cambodia. The survivor of the second category is a pro-democracy survivor, although this does not mean to

suggest that the movement is clearly and unambiguously democratic. Specific to pro-democracy survivor, this category of survivor carries with them testimony that runs counter to official memory. This testimony therefore is threatening to the government. It is a testimony urging people of the country to identifying with their victim status and seeking to punish perpetrators. Thus, this testimony constitutes what the thesis calls Real-trauma, the body of the traumatic incident that the government aspires to ignore. The Real-trauma is an account of trauma lying outside the discourse of official memory, hence, it is a manner of trauma standing opposed to Ideological-trauma.

For the purpose of the thesis and theorising the politics of survivors by borrowing from Lacanian and Žižekian perspectives, the scenario of Cambodia has been analysed psychoanalytically with the concept of *the object petit a*. To reiterate, the presence of *the object petit a* comes with its absolute function of acting as a replacement of the Real. There is a similarity between the scenario in Vietnam and Cambodia. The two cases demonstrate that the Real is impossible to access. The art of Vietnam in the diaspora shows the collective consciousness and the unconscious of the haunting memory that artists cannot erase from their memories. To some extent, the Vietnamese art examined shows that artwork is *the object petit a* that serves as a stand-in for the Real and is reflexive of the artists' *jouissance*. The same concept has been used to illuminate the Cambodian incident, particularly where Chum Mey and Vann Nath were invited by the court to share testimony of the Khmer Rouge violence. The testimony that the court receives is perhaps a *jouissance* for the pro-democracy survivors. Despite the distance the testimony has to the Real, the testimony is the only available evidence, and evidence which the anti-government survivors and judges view as a road to justice. Adjacent to this, another contribution of this chapter is to highlight the relationship between testimony that assumes the position of *the object petit a* and the formation of survivors' subjectivity. The testimony of the official memory promoted by the

government seems to cast aside the Real trauma and survivors who fall into this category are survivors who are supportive of the government. Testimony that retrieves *jouissance* becomes a testimony the anti-government survivors use and any survivors belonging to this category are survivors whose subjectivities are situated in antagonism with the government. However, the testimony in itself is a substitution for the Real and is only a way to understand and perceive a trauma. Although the testimony is not the Real, it ultimately becomes the only evidence available for the fulfilment of Cambodian survivors' quest for justice. This compels us to accept the idea of ultrapolitics as a theoretical frame, a category of politics that embraces antagonism and conflicts of memory and a category of politics that suggests that it is necessary to traverse the fantasy of post-politics.

However, it must be noted that my treatment of the case of Cambodia has not taken into account the idea that the body can be a bearer of trauma. The case of Cambodia also seems to focus on survivors who work for NGOs and who protest the government while neglecting survivors who share governmental memories yet oppose the current government. Additionally, the analysis in this chapter does not provide an analysis of post-memory, or the transmission of memory from one generation to another. The next chapter on the politics of Myanmar survivors will provide analysis that takes into account these limitations.



## **Chapter Four**

### **The Politics of Burmese Survivors:**

#### **Testimony, Body, and Trauma of the Massacre of August 08, 1988**

##### **Introduction**

In this chapter, we will resume our study of the politics of survivors by examining the case of Myanmar. By using the name Myanmar, we are referring to the name of the country that the military government gave in September 1988 to avoid the colonial name given by the British. The term ‘Burmese’, however, has been used to refer to the general population of Myanmar. The Burmese survivors referred to in this chapter are survivors who faced violence on August 8th 1988, and are still politically active in the present. Following the same lines as the chapters on Vietnam and Cambodia, in this chapter I argue that there are ‘pro-democracy survivors’ who have decided to form political coalitions aimed at promoting nationwide political change. It must be noted that Myanmar also has ‘privileged survivors’; a term referred to survivors who decided to join and ally with the military government before and after the massacre. However, this chapter focuses on pro-democracy survivors because our interest here is the politics of resistance survivors exercise in opposition to the government through invoking memory and their encounters with trauma.

The chapter proceeds through four main sections. The first section explores the contemporary political context of Myanmar. Since the country’s first military government in 1962, Myanmar’s political system has been dominated by the military’s constitution and the use

of martial law. While the military government has adopted socialist policies, its economic mismanagement has led to widespread economic problems such as poverty, inflation, unemployment, and so on. People reacted to this economic mismanagement with political resistance at the University of Rangoon in 1988 and by demanding the military government resign. Refusing to cooperate with these requests, the government responded by shooting and beating protestors, resulting in 3,000 deaths. This incident occurred on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1988, which was commonly known among the survivor as ‘the 8-8-88 massacre’. Since 1988, survivors of the 8-8-88 (The Four Eights) have played a large role in the politics of Myanmar. Therefore, it is important for the chapter to illustrate the contemporary political context of Myanmar as an understanding of Myanmar’s politics in the past and the present is vital to understanding pro-democracy survivors’ memory, trauma, body, and political resistance.

The second section illustrates survivors’ attempts to overthrow the military junta. It focuses on the use of memory by incorporating memory in testimony, with such testimony perceived as the Real-trauma. Such Real-trauma is different from the Ideological-trauma, or, the trauma in which the government creates an official historical narrative that justifies the use of violence. The Real-trauma is a narrative from the side of survivors opposed to the government and who are active in altering and countering the Ideological-Trauma. Thus, the Real-trauma suggests that it is possible for Burmese survivors to use memory to politically mobilise others and to challenge the existing government, thereby allowing us to extend further our discussion on ultrapolitics in Chapter 1. To reiterate, ultrapolitics is politics that is different from post-politics, as it is politics surrounded by the Real. Thus, in the same way as Vietnam and Cambodia, it is vital to examine how survivors have used, inflected, and maintained memory of the 8-8-88 in their campaign to dissolve the current junta government. For instance, it is apparent

in the case of the Burma Campaign UK that revealed through a cable how President Thein Sein, a current leader, had been involved in a massacre on 8-8-88.

The third section focuses on the relation between memory of the 8-8-88 and the collective trauma of survivors. By arguing that the 8-8-88 is an incident that forms a collective trauma for Burmese across the world, it suggests that such collective trauma is the ineffaceable memory that draws and entreats Burmese survivors to share this unforgettable memory. As argued in the chapter on theory, language is insufficient to illustrate trauma. This chapter argues, however, that survivors have continued to feel and perceive traumas in their bodies. In addition, the chapter draws on Marianne Hirsch's conceptual invention of 'post-memory' to evaluate and reassess the debate about whether there will be a transmission of collective trauma from one Burmese generation to others. This section argues that there are conflicting views about this in Burmese society, with some Burmese survivors insisting that the remnants of the past must stop with their generation, while others argue that it is necessary to pass this collective trauma to the next generation.

Finally, the fourth section provides overall analysis by drawing on the works of Lacan and Žižek to discuss this case study in terms of psychoanalytical and political theories. By connecting to the 4(Ps), comprising positioning, politicising, presenting, and psychoanalysing traumas elaborated in Chapter 1, the final section of this chapter argues that Lacan's theory enhances the debate and allows us to understand the case study in a Lacanian framework. The chapter draws on key Lacanian concepts such as *the object petit a*, *jouissance*, death drive, and act, demonstrating the utility of the Lacanian perspective for shedding light on the case study, and the way that the case study reinforces the general theoretical approach that the thesis has adopted.

## **The Contemporary Context of Myanmar Politics: The Rise of 88 Generation Students Group**

The aim of this section is to understand the contemporary political context of Myanmar by examining the rise of the military junta in 1962 and the subsequent imposition of socialist ideology. The implementation of socialist ideology faced reaction from protestors and thus led to the opposition movement of 1988. The junta responded to protestors with violence and the crackdown on August 8<sup>th</sup> 1988 became known as the Four Eight (8-8-88) in the politics of Myanmar. Before the victory of National League for Democracy (NLD) in a general election in late 2015, Myanmar was under the control of the junta and one of the political groups that became proactive in opposing the government was the 88 Generation Students Group, a political group which was formed officially in 2005, and whose members are mostly the survivors of the 8-8-88 massacre.

Under the leadership of General Ne Win, the junta staged a coup against U Nu and took over the country in 1962, closing off the country from the outside world in order to solve its internal problems. At this point, they perceived the priority of the nation to be managing internal disunity and restructuring its political administration. The junta rejected Western ideas, arguing that they had a negative impact on the culture and identity of Myanmar.<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to perpetuate their regime, the junta blended authoritarianism with socialism. It wrote a constitution in 1974, insisting on a one-party system and adopting socialism as the foundation for the

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<sup>1</sup> Alistair Cook, *Culture, Identity, and Religion in Southeast Asia* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 36. Robert Rotberg, *Burma: Prospects for a Democratic Future* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), 24.

country's political and social administrations.<sup>2</sup> By embracing socialism from Eastern European, Asian, African, and Latin American countries which aimed at decolonising western liberalism and capitalism, Myanmar's rulers thought that state-building through socialist ideas was an alternative to western liberalism.

The junta established the Revolutionary Council (RC) which subsequently changed into a political party called the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP). The objective of the BSPP was to instruct the Burmese on the path to Socialism and to garner support from pro-military intellectuals and politicians. In addition, the junta established the Security and Administrative Committees (SACs) led by high-ranking military officers, who had political responsibilities in the RC. SAC members were delegated to monitor every town and province and held responsibility for the implementation of laws, policies, and projects. There was a nationalisation of many private enterprises and the operation of new business conglomerates set up by military officers.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, it became evident in 1967 that adopting socialism for national development was a mistake. The government's mismanagement of the economy had led to scarcity of rice across the city of Rangoon.<sup>4</sup> Although General Ne Win had hoped to achieve popular support with his nationalisation and land reform programmes, those government's economic initiatives could not prevent economic disasters.<sup>5</sup> Socialism had continually failed since 1967 and the uprising in 1988 against the government was a popular response to the government's economic

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<sup>2</sup> Lowell Dittmer, *Burma Or Myanmar?: The Struggle for National Identity* (Hackensack and London: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte, Ltd: 2010), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Robert Taylor, and Tin Maung Maung Than, *Myanmar: Beyond Politics to Societal Imperatives* (Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2005), 49.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Streissguth, *Myanmar in Pictures* (Visual Geography Series, 2007), 30. Christina Fink, *Living Silence: Burma under Military Rule* (Bangkok: White Lotus Company Ltd, 2001), 35.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Seekins, *State and Society in Modern Rangoon* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 93. See also: Fink, *Living Silence*, 35.

mismanagement. Robert Rotberg observed, a long time ago, that “by 1987, socialism failed. The government’s inability to manage the economy and provide the necessary good and services to the people was a major reason for the popular peaceful revolution of 1988.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Lowell Dittmer argued that “the junta’s comprehensive focus on potential threats to national security is ironically accompanied by a minimalist view of the state’s obligation to promote the general welfare – the economy seems to be seen as self-sufficient, or at least self-reliant.”<sup>7</sup>

Insofar as a combination of socialism and military authoritarianism had proved detrimental to the development of the country since 1974, the Burmese people began to show less tolerance towards military rule, including the socialist ideas and values that the junta sought to impose to the country in the early 1960s. With their intolerance of socialism and economic downturns, people marched on the streets of Rangoon in summer of 1988, trying to decolonise the country for the second time since their independence from the British Empire in 1949.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, protestors accused the junta’s rule of carrying the country backwards to the British colonial period. At 8:08am on August 8th, 1988, around 10,000 people marched onto the street of cities all over Myanmar, demanding the resignation of the military government. The event has commonly been known in Myanmar as *Shitlay Loan A-Yay A-Hki*, or the “Four Eights Affair (8-8-88). People had protested the military’s mismanagement of the economy. They also opposed the government’s political repression, violence, and manipulation of the media and communication networks. The government’s response was violent as they repressed protestors by force, with the resulting deaths of 3,000 people commonly known as the ‘8-8-88 massacre’.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Rotberg, *Burma: Prospects for a Democratic Future* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), 24.

<sup>7</sup> Lowell Dittmer, *Burma Or Myanmar?: The Struggle for National Identity* (London and Hackensack, 2010), 8. Michael Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 136-137.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 100.

John Dale notes that the incident was “more dramatic and bloody than the Chinese repression of protests in Tiananmen Square the following year”.<sup>9</sup>

After the 8-8-88 massacre, the military rebuilt the country by means of absolute control over the state. Myanmar was ruled by decree and martial law, combining new laws with ones revived from the colonial periods. The military legitimised martial law because they claimed that the country was facing political instability that threatened to erode its security.<sup>10</sup> Despite the government’s promise of a general election in the middle of September 1988 that resulted in the Maung Maung administration, a civilian government committed to the liberalisation of political administration and that permitted a multi-party democratic constitution,<sup>11</sup> some military members were reluctant to accept a democratic agenda led by a civilian government. As a consequence, Maung Maung was overthrown by Saw Maung in September of the same year. Saw Maung and his officers viewed that it was necessary for the Military Council to restore law and order and to rebuild the administrative machinery of the state. The Saw Maung government also encouraged corporations and private sectors to participate in rebuilding the state and restoring public communications in order to deliver goods to people in the rural areas and eliminate starvation.<sup>12</sup> To ensure absolute control over the state administration, the government had established the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). SLORC’s immediate tasks had comprised four objectives: to ensure law and order and peace and tranquillity, to secure

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<sup>9</sup> John Dale, *Free Burma: Transnational Legal Action and Corporate Accountability* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 63-64.

<sup>10</sup> Trevor Wilson, *Eyewitness to Early Reform in Myanmar* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Norman Owen, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 503.

<sup>12</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 160.

and smooth transport, to ease the food, clothing and shelter needs of the people, and to hold democratic multi-party general elections.<sup>13</sup>

SLORC passed the Political Parties Registration Law on 27 September 1988, stating that all parties competing for election were required to register with the Election Commission. Michael Charney notes that “by 28 February deadline, 233 parties had registered. Not all of the new parties were legitimate, for some appear to have been merely fronts for the military.”<sup>14</sup> The largest and most popular party, however, was the National League for Democracy (NLD), headed by former brigadier Aung Gyi, Ne Win’s deputy at the time of the 1962 coup; General Tin Oo, Ne Win’s deputy in the 1970s; and Daw (‘Aunt’) Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of General Aung San, whose name became widely known to the government’s protestors in a very short period of time.<sup>15</sup> With the popularity of the NLD as a backdrop, before the transfer of power to a civilian party, it seems that the Saw Maung government ‘had played a constitution game’ by having the 1947 constitution rewritten. The purpose to having the constitution rewritten was to delay and possibly prevent the transfer of power from the junta to the popular civilian party, the NLD. The SLORC announced that there would be no transfer of power to the civilian government, unless a draft on constitution overseen by the junta was accomplished first.<sup>16</sup> In the SLORC’s view, “the holding of elections would depend on cooperation among the government, the people, and the political parties. The date would not be set until the [military] parties had finished organising, when the people were ready to cooperate, and when the country is peaceful and tranquil without disturbances.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 160.

<sup>14</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 161.

<sup>15</sup> Owen, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, 504.

<sup>16</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 174.

<sup>17</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 164.



From the junta's viewpoint, the civilian party was chaotic and unable to handle national tensions effectively. With this negative attitude towards the civilian party, the SLORC made an effort to prevent popular support for the NLD.<sup>18</sup> This was exemplified in August 1989 by the start of the SLORC's six-month long campaign to issue citizenship identity cards to every Burmese aged eighteen and over in order for them to be eligible to vote in the election. The SLORC also began to scrutinise the citizenship of all political candidates in November of the same year. This can be interpreted as a strategy to undermine the political eligibility of Aung San Suu Kyi by describing her as a disqualified political candidate because of her marriage to a foreigner.<sup>19</sup> Despite these measures, on June 1990, the NLD won 392 out of the 447 seats with the votes of over 7.9 million people. The junta immediately rejected the NLD's victory and tactically claimed that the election was fraudulent.<sup>20</sup> As the SLORC found the NLD's victory unacceptable, the country remained under military rule. After establishing the Commission on October 1992, the SLORC had devised a strategy to eradicate the NLD's participation in the constitutional and political processes.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the performance of Myanmar's economy was dismal due to the boycotts and sanctions imposed on it by Western governments since 1990. Such international conditions entwined with the government's inept economic management constrained the government's ability to distribute resources, wealth, and prosperity equally and nationally, preventing them from reducing poverty in Myanmar.<sup>22</sup>

Between 1997 and the present, political tension in Myanmar has been predicated on confrontation between the military government and the democratic forces led by Aung San Suu Kyi. The process of writing a new constitution led by the military government suddenly ended

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<sup>18</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 165.

<sup>19</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 168.

<sup>20</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 168.

<sup>21</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 173-176.

<sup>22</sup> Owen, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, 506.

in 1996 when the NLD members stopped re-drafting the constitution, claiming that the process itself was undemocratic. In 1997, the SLORC changed its name into the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and the chairman, Senior General Than Shwe became president of the nation, ruling the country in the same fashion as General Ne Win.”<sup>23</sup> Under the leadership of Than Shwe, Myanmar was still unable to overcome its failing economy. Although the efforts of western countries to isolate the military regime had an impact on Myanmar’s population, the military elite have maintained and even expanded their fabulous wealth and luxurious lifestyles.<sup>24</sup> These are the political and economic conditions that regulate and contextualise the politics of survivors in Myanmar.

Poor economic conditions led to the ‘Saffron Revolution’ on September 2007. “The revolution was named after the traditional colour of the Buddhist monks’ robes and named in line with the orange, rose, and other multi-coloured democracy revolutions in other countries.”<sup>25</sup> The junta responded by suppressing a group of monk protestors, actions which probably eroded the legitimacy of the junta themselves, because attacking monks is seen as offensive to the religious values of the Burmese majority.<sup>26</sup> One of the civilian groups that emerged before and after the Saffron Revolution was the 88 Generation Students Group, which first became known in Myanmar in 2005. The Group, comprising survivors of the 8-8-88 massacre, have been intent not to establish itself as a political party, but rather as a social movement. During the Saffron Revolution, the Group stood alongside monks in calling for the junta to resign. The junta responded by arresting leaders of the Group e.g. Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Mie Mie, and Nilar Thein – all of them are survivors from the massacre- by accusing them of forming an illegal

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<sup>23</sup> Owen, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, 506.

<sup>24</sup> Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 196.

<sup>25</sup> David Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 137.

<sup>26</sup> Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar*, 137.

political organisation.<sup>27</sup> The military government also condemned the Group for conspiracy to overthrow the current government and of receiving support from private groups in the US.<sup>28</sup> The US was criticised by the military government for assisting one of the Group leaders to avoid imprisonment.<sup>29</sup> Although all leading members of the Group were released on January 12<sup>th</sup> following the government's nationwide prisoner amnesty, a few reports mentioned that the group's leaders faced hardships during their imprisonment.

In conclusion, since the junta came to power, Myanmar's political priorities have been nation-building based on democratic values and national reconciliation.<sup>30</sup> The 88 Generation Student Groups, or the pro-democracy survivors that the thesis is referring to, have established themselves as an eminent pro-democracy group and the Group's ideology has not changed since 1988. Since the military came to power in 1962, Myanmar has faced ongoing tension and irresolvable conflict between the military and democratic governments. It seems from the viewpoint of the Group leaders that the 8-8-88 massacre is an indelible memory as well as collective trauma. We will see in the next section that the Group seems to use and maintain this wounded memory as part of its campaign for democracy promotion in Myanmar. By supporting Aung San Suu Kyi, the Group has rallied behind the NLD and opposed military rule. The decision of the Group to revive painful memories of the 8-8-88 massacre and to give testimony is interpreted as part of a political campaign to erode the credibility of the military government.

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<sup>27</sup> The British Broadcasting Corporation, "Burma's 1988 protests," accessed October 20, 2015. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7012158.stm>.

<sup>28</sup> The New York Times, "Monks' actions draw hard-line response in Myanmar," accessed October 20, 2015. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/world/asia/10iht-myanmar.1.7451762.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/world/asia/10iht-myanmar.1.7451762.html?_r=0).

<sup>29</sup> The New York Times, "Monks' actions draw hard-line response in Myanmar," accessed October 20, 2015. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/world/asia/10iht-myanmar.1.7451762.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/world/asia/10iht-myanmar.1.7451762.html?_r=0).

<sup>30</sup> Khin Zaw Win, "2010 And the Unfinished Task of Nation-Building," in *Ruling Myanmar: From Cyclone Nargis to National Elections*, ed. Nick Cheesman et al. (Pasir Pajang: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies Singapore, 2010), 29.

## **Testimony, the Use of Memory, and Democracy**

This section highlights that the testimony of Burmese survivors is a political strategy with the objective of undermining the government's credibility and promote democracy in Myanmar. The use of memory to undermine the credibility of the government reflects Žižek's ultrapolitics. The essence of this section is to show that the use of memory to promote democracy in Myanmar is similar to the strategy of Vietnamese and Cambodian survivors promoting democracy in their own countries. What is more, this section also emphasises the way that the case of Myanmar continues our hypothesis about the remarkable differences between Ideological-Trauma and the Real-trauma.

To begin with, in his work *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (2014), Žižek suggests that politics is characterised by the struggle from all sides to give normative definition to it.<sup>31</sup> For instance, the conservative liberal defines it in terms of the conflict of freedom and equality, whereas the traditional leftist argues that they are two sides of the same coin. The competition to define politics is to elevate politics to ontological status, meaning that what is viewed, defined, and accepted as the norm of politics has been recognised as totality. However, Žižek cautions that it is important to remain conscious of the element that evades the totality of politics, which he recognises as an immediate contingency that eludes totality. Connected to the discussion of ultrapolitics in the theory chapter, Žižek suggests that politics is the claim to occupy its universalised meaning by setting itself as totality but which in so doing disguises the immediate 'natural' singularity.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, he means that there is an antagonistic element that also constitutes the ontology of politics. Žižek identifies the Real as

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<sup>31</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards A New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (London and New York: Verso, 2014), 197.

<sup>32</sup> Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 26.

originating from the contingency that always-already situated within politics itself.<sup>33</sup> The Real signifies the untamed element of social antagonism. Put in a Lacanian fashion, it can be said that Žižek's ultrapolitics is politics that is surrounded and encircled by the Real. In ultrapolitics, there is always-already an ontological gap between a politicisation of totality that forms the whole and the antagonism of the Real that can disrupt the coherency of politics.<sup>34</sup>

By disrupting the coherency of politics under the authority of the junta, this section shows that, in accordance with the idea of ultrapolitics, survivors have insisted on maintaining memory of the 8-8-88 for the politico-ideological purposes in separating their memory and trauma from the current political enclosure. This section aims to develop the theory of ultrapolitics outlined in Chapter 1 using the experiences of survivors in Myanmar. To do this, I will examine survivors' use of memory, showing that it can be characterised as the untamed element of social antagonism and hence shows the relation between ultrapolitics and the Real.

Consistent with the cases of Vietnam and Cambodia, it is difficult to draw a clear line between memory and politics and hence I emphasise the difference between Ideological-Trauma and Real-Trauma. As Min Ko Naing, a leader of 88 Generation Students Group said at the anniversary at Mandalay that:

Today [8-8-88] is the day when we came out among the explosives and cheered our slogan. We were beaten by the butts of guns and batons on the street during our demonstration. Sometimes when we walked down the street, our flag fell down when we were challenged. But we picked it up again and displayed it in the rain. We had to struggle very hard for the last 24 years. A lot of

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<sup>33</sup> Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 197.

flashes from cameras hit us today unlike over the past 24 years. Today, we put up our flag on the wall and even put our full flag on the carpet at our office.<sup>35</sup>

Apparently, commemoration of the 8-8-88 is undertaken by the 88 Generation Students. The political aim behind this is to reiterate, redeem, and re-emphasise the memories of those who were murdered during the nationwide protest. *The Irrawaddy* points out the growing significance of this commemoration: “the 8-8-88 uprising occurred in Burma more than 26 years ago, but it was only 25 years later, in August 2013, that the people of Myanmar were officially allowed to commemorate it.”<sup>36</sup> Ko Ko Gyi, the pro-democracy survivor and one of the leaders of the 88 Generation Students says that people attend commemorative events in order to remember ‘politically’ the lives of at least 3,000 people, who were killed by the military government on that day.<sup>37</sup> It is probable that Ko Gyi maintains memory of the 8-8-88 in order to remind Burmese people in the present that politically Burma today is not different from Burma in 1988. It is also apparent that Ko Gyi maintains memory of 8-8-88 because he intends to use this memory as a means to achieve an end. Similar to the cases of Vietnam and Cambodia, the Myanmar case suggests that memory and testimony are not ends in themselves, but simply instrumental. Memory is not an end in itself in a sense that the past is not something that can be buried completely underneath the temporal and spatial structures of the present. Memory is still fresh in the present because memory is served as a means for the political ends. Particularly in the case of a painful memory, a memory is flexible and can be used by survivors for political ends. In the

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<sup>35</sup> The Irrawaddy, “Min Ko Naing’s 88 Uprising Video Tribute,” accessed October 09, 2015, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/min-ko-naings-88-uprising-video-tribute.html>.

<sup>36</sup> The Irrawaddy, “From Berlin to Burma, Democracy’s Uneven March,” accessed October 09, 2015, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/contributor/berlin-burma-democracys-uneven-march.html>.

<sup>37</sup> The BurmaNet News, “Mizzima News: Activists hark back to 8.8.88 uprising, warns junta of similar unrest – Ko Dee,” accessed October 09, 2015, <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2007/08/08/mizzima-news-activists-mark-back-to-8888-uprising-warns-junta-of-similar-unrest-ko-dee/>.

case of Burma, Ko Gyi even warns that the junta must implement political reforms and allow for the amendment of the 2008 constitution, otherwise there could be an uprising in similar fashion to the 8-8-88.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps, the relations among the collective memory, trauma, and political ideology of the Burmese survivors are concisely put through this passage:

This painful memory, part of our collective trauma and multiple individual traumas, has been replenished many times since, not least by the military's shootings of civilians in 1962, in 1976 and in 1988. 1988 was the great watershed event that has changed all our lives. But it was not the end to Burmese people's travails; almost two decades after the junta's crackdown, Burma's rulers are still tightening the screws.<sup>39</sup>

A similar interpretation can be found in the testimony of Khin Omar, a survivor of 8-8-88 and a Burmese activist based in exile, who expresses that "it has been 22 years since 8-8-88, but the memory and spirit of that fateful day still lives on vividly in my heart, and the heart of many activists inside and outside Burma."<sup>40</sup> This reflection of the Real-Trauma also emanates from a group of Burmese pro-democracy survivors who have professed themselves as political activists based in Chiangmai, Thailand, e.g. Patrick Nyein Aung and Aung Naing Soe who similarly express concern that "despite the horrors of the memory and the loss of thousands of innocent lives, the anniversary is an energising source that will continue to inspire Burmese citizens to

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<sup>38</sup> The BurmaNet News, "Mizzima News."

<sup>39</sup> The Democracy for Burma, "Burma's Struggle, Aung San Suu Kyi's Role," accessed October 09, 2015, <https://democracyforburma.wordpress.com/2009/08/10/burmas-struggle-aung-san-suu-kyis-role/>.

<sup>40</sup> The Burma Partnership, "A Day of Unity That Must Live On," accessed October 09, 2015, <http://www.burmapartnership.org/2010/08/a-day-of-unity-that-must-live-on/>.

stand up for freedom and democracy for generations to come.”<sup>41</sup> Min Ko Naing, one of the leaders of the 88 Generation Students, comments on his own artwork during an art exhibition in Rangoon for the commemoration of the event of August 1988 in 2013, by saying that “Myanmar military dictators have historians write the stories they want. Truth was hidden. [But] we have this art-show to seek the truth about what happened in the 8888 uprising.”<sup>42</sup> Juxtaposed with Ko Naing’s artwork are the five photographs displayed by Kyaw Zaw, a pro-democracy survivor who is currently working with the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society and expresses that “I’m sure this show can tell the young people today what the 88 demonstration was about. The democracy revolution hasn’t finished yet, but the current reform process is a consequence of the 1988 uprising.”<sup>43</sup> Again, Khin Omar affirms that “we need to move on from the tragedies towards positive action until we achieve democracy. We must learn from our past and honour and preserve the spirit of 8.8.88—the spirit of unity, sacrifice and setting aside differences of political beliefs and opinions—be they political beliefs, ideology, ethnicity, religion or gender.”<sup>44</sup> Such a democratic viewpoint resonates with Ko Pyone Cho’s, a survivor and one of the leaders of the 88 Generation Students, who concerns that “the 8-8-88 movement was the mother of all subsequent uprisings, all of which have had only one strong message that still echoes today: People want democratic changes. After our repeated demands for change, the government is now doing some reforms. But I have to say, there’s a long road to the change we want. Take the

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<sup>41</sup> The Chinland Guardian.com, “Activists Remember Anniversary of 8888 Massacre,” accessed October 09, 2015, <http://www.chinlandguardian.com/index.php/news/item/767-activists-remember-anniversary-of-8888-massacre>.

<sup>42</sup> The Nation, “Horrors of ’88 on public view,” accessed October 09, 2015, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/life/Horrors-of-88-on-public-view-30212116.html>.

<sup>43</sup> The Nation, “Horrors of ’88 on public view.”

<sup>44</sup> The Burma Partnership, “A Day of Unity That Must Live On.”



Constitution, for example. If we all take part in the reform process, as we did in 1988, we will win”.<sup>45</sup>

Testimonies of those survivors affirm the thesis’s theoretical contention that not only is the memory of traumatic events in some ways indelible, but also that these memories can be used critically as tool to achieve political ends. Far from taking it into account as the truth of the event, a testimony of the 8-8-88 is maintained by survivors as an essential component for promoting democracy. After gaining independence from the British Empire in 1949, the politics of the pro-democracy survivor represents one of the contemporary political tensions of postcolonial Myanmar. This argument, however, does not suggest that the politics of Myanmar is only governed by the struggle for freedom from military rule on the part of surviving students. It is rather useful to recognise that there are also other inevitable tensions with regards to politics and society that stem from chronic problems of Buddhist nationalism, racism, and sexism, and have occasionally led to large scale sectarian violence around border areas.

Despite the government’s permission to commemorate the massacre for the first time in 2013, another important step for the development of democracy and for the fulfilment of justice for the pro-democracy survivors is an investigation into the crackdown and prosecution of those who are responsible for the killings. Following the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre, Human Rights Watch put pressure on the military government to immediately release other political prisoners and to abolish the unlimited power consolidated by the 2008 constitution that gives the government overwhelming power over civil society. The NGO also asks that the government of Thein Sein “create a genuinely independent body with a broad membership to investigate the

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<sup>45</sup> The Irrawaddy, “The Day a New Burma was Born,” accessed October 09, 2015, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/feature/the-day-a-new-burma-was-born.html>.

major government crackdowns since 1988 and to make recommendations for prosecutions.”<sup>46</sup> Burma Campaign UK, the leading UK-based organisation with the objective to free Burma, also launched a campaign demanding President Thein Sein reveal his full army record and his role on 8-8-88. Many Burmese living in the UK who are members of this organisation, some of whom are survivors of the massacre, have urged people worldwide to send an email to President Thein Sein to reveal his involvement in the 1988 crackdown.<sup>47</sup>

Nonetheless, a US embassy diplomatic cable dated 20<sup>th</sup> October 2014 has revealed that in 1988 “Major Thein Sein served as commander of Light Infantry Division (LID) – 55, one of the elite organisations loyal to the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP). In that capacity, he distinguished himself, as did Soe Win, in the crackdown against the 1988 uprising in support of democracy.”<sup>48</sup> The American cable shows that President Thein Sein has denied responsibility for the 1988 massacre insofar as he distinguishes himself from the superior commanders who ordered the killings. However, the main issue of interest to this thesis is neither whether President Thein Sein had involvement with the massacre or not, nor explore the alliance between international human rights organisations and the Burmese local campaign for democracy. Rather, those events demonstrate that the 8-8-88 is an unforgettable memory that can be used, maintained, and strategized in the present in order to mobilise government protestors and to delegitimise the military government of President Thein Sein. It is probable in the case of Myanmar that memory could be mobilised by the democratic movement to de-legitimise the military regime in the present, despite the two decades that have elapsed since the massacre.

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<sup>46</sup> The Human Rights Watch, “Burma: Justice for 1988 Massacres,” accessed October 11, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/08/06/burma-justice-1988-massacres>.

<sup>47</sup> The Burma Campaign UK, “President Thein Sein Should Reveal Role in ‘88 Massacre,” accessed October 12, 2015, <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/president-thein-sein-should-reveal-role-in-88-massacre/>.

<sup>48</sup> The Burma Campaign UK, “Thein Sein – President of Burma,” accessed October 12, 2015, <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/media/Thein-Sein-President-of-Burma.pdf>.

In addition, if President Thein Sein is believed to be behind massacre, it can be argued that memories of 8-8-88 are a political strategy that advantaged Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD Party in her victory in the general election in Burma in November 2015. Before the general election, Aung San Suu Kyi told the media that winning the general election in November 2015 would be significant in fulfilling the political mission that the 88 student generation has not yet completed.<sup>49</sup> During the election campaign, in July 2015, Suu Kyi invoked the memory of her assassinated father and declared the general election an opportunity to fulfil her father's political ideology by replacing military government with a representative, democratically elected one. Besides her personal memory of her assassinated father, Suu Kyi also expressed that winning a general election is a political responsibility in order to fulfil a political mission on behalf of those who were killed while striving for Burmese independence.<sup>50</sup>

In her speech at party headquarters, Suu Kyi said that "the NLD believes that we have a responsibility to the martyrs who were killed before they finished their duty to achieve independence."<sup>51</sup> The 88 Student Generation, notably the pro-democracy survivors, did not hesitate to give their support to Aung San Suu Kyi's party in the November election.<sup>52</sup> In a similar fashion to the Cambodian pro-democracy survivors influenced by the Khmer Rouge's atrocities, Burmese pro-democracy survivors are not only influenced by the 8-8-88, but it can also be said that these survivors intend to use such memory to erode the legitimacy of the Thein Sein government so as to campaign for democracy and consolidate their political standpoints

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<sup>49</sup> The National World, "Myanmar '88 student leaders joins Suu Kyi's party to run in polls," accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/southeast-asia/myanmar-88-student-leader-joins-suu-kyis-party-to-run-in-polls>.

<sup>50</sup> The Myanmar Times, "Activists seek to run as NLD candidates," accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/15568-activists-seek-to-run-as-nld-candidates.html>.

<sup>51</sup> The National World, "Myanmar '88 student leaders joins Suu Kyi's party to run in polls," accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/southeast-asia/myanmar-88-student-leader-joins-suu-kyis-party-to-run-in-polls>.

<sup>52</sup> The Radio Free Asia, "88 Generation Group Pushes Voter Education in Myanmar's Irrawaddy Region," accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/voter-09232015165218.html>.

behind Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi's speech, which is supported by the 88 Student Generation, is successful in unravelling to us how the personal and collective memory of the massacre has been maintained as a testimony or even being used as political instrument aimed at bringing political change in Burma.

It is worth interrogating memory of the 8-8-88 drawn from the perspective of the Burmese 'privileged survivor' or survivors who hold key governmental positions in contemporary Burma. Unfortunately, the Burmese government's refusal to speak of the massacre of the 8-8-88 creates difficulties for obtaining the perspective of the privileged survivor. It is available, however, in some sources that the government views the student uprising in August 1988 as resulting from communist and western influences. The government's attempt to label those students as communists is an example of what we referred to in the theory chapter as an Ideological-Trauma, or a trauma that is useful for the government to maintain the status quo.

In affirmation of this view, Thiha Saw, who was working for the Burmese news agency in 1988, told *Deutsche Welle* that in the government's viewpoint, "sometimes students marched into police stations, stole the weapons there and used them to shoot soldiers. A few people thought to be members of the intelligence agency were beheaded by an angry mob right in public. It was not a political movement. It was absolute savagery."<sup>53</sup> The idea that students had associated with communists from Moscow and Beijing is reiterated by Khin Maung Gyi, of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), who believes that the student uprising was ideologically inspired by communist ideology with close assistance from China and the Soviet

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<sup>53</sup> The DW, "Myanmar: The uprising of 1988," accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/the-uprising-of-1988/a-17005335>.

Union.<sup>54</sup> The government's Ideological-Trauma implies that massacre is legitimate because the killing of students was necessary to prevent the country from falling under communist influence.

It is worth quoting Robert Taylor, a historian of Burma, at length, when he argues that:

During 1988, as the students grew in confidence, and the authorities further revealed their incompetence, demands of a political and economic were made. The role of a number of the previously underground reading groups, formed to exchange views on current developments in the theory and practice, some affiliated with Communist or other political groups, led the authorities to see the hand of more nefarious political forces at work among the student population. At Yangon Arts and Sciences University (RASU), three factions of students emerged. While they all worked against the government, leadership rivalries among them were too strong to allow them to form a firm coalition. These groups were led by Paw Ou Tun and Moe Thee Zun, both of whom had Communist affiliations, Min Zaya, and Than Win. By criticising the government strongly and publicly for the corrupt and incompetent behaviour of its officials, they began to overcome the inertia that had kept students from publicly opposing the regime since U Thant affair in 1974. When students received financial and other supports from Western embassies, they began to feel that the BSPP would have to concede to them. After the BBC and VOA Burmese language broadcasting services began reporting on the students' activities, including the call for a general strike on 8 August 1988, the students' movement became nationwide. When foreign radio stations reported that members of the United States Senate had passed a resolution supporting their movement and criticising the government, the

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<sup>54</sup> The DW, "Myanmar: The uprising of 1988."

students' numbers swelled as powerful foreign forces appeared ready to assist them in changing the state's managers."<sup>55</sup>

To conclude this section, similarities between Burma and the cases of Vietnam and Cambodia can be highlighted, particularly the ways that memory of the massacre is used, maintained, inflected, and strategized by survivors for the objective of democracy promotion in contemporary Myanmar. Despite being told to forget and bury the painful memories by the state, it seems hard for pro-democracy survivors to erase painful memories from their minds. The section suggests that the testimony given by the 88 Student Generation is the Real-Trauma. Survivors' testimony is useful to emotionally and critically rouse the next generation of people to pay attention to the massacre's position in the history of Myanmar. Myanmar in the post-colonial era is recognised as a country that has not yet been freed and fully democratised. Therefore, the politics of pro-democracy survivors based either at home or overseas is a possible representation of the political scenario in postcolonial Burma. The thesis, however, suggests that we cannot understand the politics of the survivors by depending on the perspective of pro-democracy survivors alone. A complete understanding of the politics of the politics of survivors must also incorporate the view of the privileged survivor; a survivor who is holding a governmental position. The military government's refusal to speak of the massacre hinders our ability to acquire knowledge of this. However, some academic sources and some observers suggest that the massacre was necessary for the security of the nation because the students were suspected of affiliating with communism. This governmental perspective is interpreted by the thesis as the

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<sup>55</sup> Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, 421-422.

Ideological-Trauma. In the next section, we will continue a discussion on the theory of the politics of survivors by examining the relation among collective trauma, body, and subjectivity.

### **Debating ‘Post-Memory’: Trauma, Body, and Subjectivity**

The main argument of this section is that the massacre of 8<sup>th</sup> August 1988 (8-8-88) is viewed by pro-democracy Burmese survivors as an event marking a collective bodily trauma and it remains difficult to disseminate this wounded memory in linguistic form. Thus, given our theoretical account that a trauma is something that the body could feel and perceive yet remains impossible for language to communicate, this may lead to a dialogue with ‘post-memory’, a term initiated by Marianne Hirsch to suggest the transfer of memory from one generation to the next, while the latter has the freedom to deconstruct and to raise doubt over the memory passed on to them. This term is valuable as it opens a discussion about whether in reality the next generation will deconstruct and be sceptical of the memory that their ancestors communicate to them. Although there is a similarity with the cases of Vietnam, Cambodia, the discussion of this through Hirsch’s post-memory in relation to body and trauma in the case of Myanmar marks a difference with the two cases discussed in the previous chapters.

To begin with, and to reiterate, the 8-8-88 movement is marked by survivors as a day that symbolises memory of the popular uprising against the military dictatorship. Simultaneously, it is also recognised as a painful memory. A Burmese survivor now living in exile, Min Zin, has labelled the 8-8-88 as the ‘Burmese Spring’. He recalls memory on that day through his testimony as follows:

Student-led protests eventually snowballed into a nationwide popular uprising on Aug. 8, 1988 (8-8-88). You can think of it, without much exaggeration, as the ‘Burmese Spring’ but winter came early and nipped our hopes in the bud. On September 18 the military staged a coup, killing hundreds of unarmed protesters. According to independent estimates, at least 10,000 people were killed in August and September of 1988.”<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, a prominent Burmese political activist, Aung Din expresses memory of 8-8-88 during an interview, stating that “I was a student leader in 1988. I and the other student leaders organized a nationwide popular uprising. The same military junta as today gunned down thousands of peaceful demonstrators in the street -- people who were peacefully calling for political reforms, and an end to single-party rule.”<sup>57</sup> Khin Saw Win, likewise, maintains that violence on that day is a vivid memory for survivors and victims, which poses an obstacle to the process of national reconciliation. He recalls the violence on that day:

Ten years ago, around the middle of August, while they were demonstrating peacefully on the streets of Burma, more than 6000 unarmed civilians, students including children of under 16 years, and Buddhist monks were killed by the gunfire of troops from the brutal military regime. The killing started from midnight of August 8, in front of the city hall in Rangoon, Burma. When I went to the Rangoon General Hospital, where I worked, on the next day, the 9th of August, we

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<sup>56</sup> The Irrawaddy, “Paying the Debt: 25 Years Later, Burma’s Struggle for Freedom Isn’t Over,” accessed October 12, 2015, <http://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/paying-the-debt-25-years-later-burmas-struggle-for-freedom-isnt-over.html>.

<sup>57</sup> The Liberal Institute, “Aung Din Interviewed with The Liberal Institute,” accessed October 02, 2015. <http://www.liberalinstitute.com/AungDinInterview.html>.



received hundreds of injured people and dead bodies for the whole day until night. I witnessed the incidents and was actively involved in taking care of these injured people.”<sup>58</sup>

The massacre of 8-8-88 is an unvanquished memory for the Burmese survivors because they have maintained the horrific day as an unforgettable and collective trauma. It can be said that in similarity to Vietnamese and Cambodian survivors, Burmese survivors’ testimonies of the 8-8-88 reflect attempts to represent trauma through language. In a Lacanian perspective, the field of discursive representation is the extension of the social linguistic to the external realm of discourse; the Real.<sup>59</sup> In the thesis’s theory chapter, we defined the Real as a trauma that stands outside discourse and the Real as something that signifies a limitation of the social order. Thus, language is less capable of illuminating the Real because the Real imposes the impossibility for language and curtails language’s capacity to represent it. Trauma can only be incorporated into language to a certain extent because language has a limited ability to elucidate the Real. This tension between language and trauma was one of my central arguments in the Vietnam and Cambodia chapters. In this section, however, I argue that the case of Myanmar may suggest that we need to attend to the relationship between trauma, memory, language, and- crucially- the body.

At this point, I follow Shoshana Felman who argues that testimony is not simply about incorporating the Real into language.<sup>60</sup> Instead, she suggests that trauma *ought* to be understood as a bodily experience. The body, Felman argues, is “the ultimate site of memory of individual

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<sup>58</sup> The Burma Watch, “The Memory of 8-8-88 Will Live On,” accessed October 02, 2015, <http://www.burmawatch.org/com-khin-mem-8-8-88.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Ian Parker and David Pavon-Cuellar, *Lacan, Discourse, Event: New Psychoanalytic Approaches to Textual Indeterminacy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 47.

<sup>60</sup> Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: 2002).

and collective trauma”<sup>61</sup>; it is trauma that “makes the body matter and has become not only memorable discursive scenes.”<sup>62</sup> The essential argument that we could draw from Felman’s oeuvre is the relationship between the body and trauma. Trauma is signified as both a bodily experience of the individual and of collective trauma. The main point that Felman asks is not whether language is able or unable to represent trauma as a whole. Yet following Felman, this thesis suggests that perhaps the Lacanian Real is rather seen as the bodily experience of trauma. Understood as the Real, it is the bodily experience’s embodiment of painful memory that cannot be symbolised or easily translated into language. This precisely means that it is possible for the body ‘to feel the Real’ but impossible for language to ‘act out’ the Real. Trauma is something considered as a particular experience of the individual, as something that a body can perceive, but which cannot be translated directly and entirely into a speaking language; largely because there is no such thing as a metalanguage that could represent trauma as a whole.<sup>63</sup>

Felman’s argument draws our attention to the irreducible link between the body and trauma. A similar argument is pursued in Catarina Kinnvall’s work, where, following Lacan, she also sees the limitation of language as something that can represent the Real. Kinnvall argues that retelling the trauma signifies the emotional aspect for the teller, but at the same times it is the realness of the event that is problematic.<sup>64</sup> This argument also appears in Cathy Caruth’s work on trauma, where she emphasises the appalling shock that exceeds a capacity of linguistic representation as a key characteristic of trauma. It is implied in Caruth’s work, however, that trauma is perhaps a bodily experience, which can re-emerge or be repeated with different

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<sup>61</sup> Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious*, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Ellie Ragland-Sullivan and Dragan Milovanovic, *Lacan: Topologically Speaking* (New York; Other Press, 2004), 87.

<sup>64</sup> Catarina Kinnvall, “Trauma and the Politics of Fear: Europe at the Crossroads,” in *Emotions in Politics: The Affect Dimension in Political Tension*, ed. Nicolas Demertzis (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 150-151.

psychological impacts such as flashbacks and nightmares. In her seminal work, *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth writes that “in its general definition, trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena.”<sup>65</sup>

As suggested by the literature discussed above, it is the body that allows individuals to continually experience and maintain trauma. The continuity of experiencing trauma through the body is another possibility for understanding collective trauma. Through the body, trauma is felt, entangled, and maintained within the body of wounded individuals. The testimony of the Burmese survivor is a collective trauma, not because language is able to express trauma as a whole, but because traumas are attached to those survivors’ bodies. Through the testimony of the three Burmese survivors that I have cited earlier, there is a possibility that they still feel traumas of the 8-8-88 in their bodies. Apart from those three survivors, there are others such as Myo Mint, a survivor and former prisoner, who confesses that he sometimes wakes up in the middle of the night, sweating and shaking because of the image of the tortured prisoners that he cannot get out of his mind. The *Washington Post* writes about him that “it could be a dog barking that jars him from sleep. It could be a memory. The images of tortured prisoners haunt him.”<sup>66</sup> The survivor even stresses that “I know exactly how they feel, how they suffer. As long as other prisoners are behind bars, I cannot ignore that. So I work for them.”<sup>67</sup> This is probably exemplified as collective trauma bound up in the bodies, feelings, and emotions of those suffering individuals, in this case, survivors.

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<sup>65</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 91.

<sup>66</sup> The Washington Post, “Ex-Inmates Describe Torture in Myanmar,” accessed October 06, 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/02/AR2006010201865\\_3.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/02/AR2006010201865_3.html).

<sup>67</sup> The Washington Post, “Ex-Inmates Describe Torture in Myanmar.”

Juxtaposed with the relation between trauma, language, and the body, it is useful to examine whether collective trauma also contributes to the formation of subjectivity. Subjectivity is articulated by Lacan as a sense of life that questions every foundation of universalism and to subsequently resist its meaning.<sup>68</sup> The subject situates its understanding of the world in relation to the imaginary, the symbolic, and the Real. The symbolic and imaginary mark consistency and integrity to the subjects in terms of knowledge, body, and meaning. However, it is the encounter with the Real through which the fantasy of consistency is dissipated and disrupted. Such an uncompromised relationship among the imaginary, the symbolic, and the Real is the starting point that leads to the formation of Lacanian subjectivity and after the encountering with the Real, from which the new subject emerges. As long as subjectivity in Lacan is understood as a sense of self that could resist universal meaning, such subjectivity is the subjectivity that emerges after encountering with the Real, which urges one to question every ground of social life.<sup>69</sup> The ground of social life can be understood as objectivity, or forms of social being that appear to be materially stable<sup>70</sup>, in opposition to a Lacanian subjectivity, which shows the lack within constancy and within specificity given the recognition that such a resisting subjectivity is able to disrupt every objectivity.

The memory Burmese survivors possess of 8-8-88 can be understood through the Lacanian theory of subjectivity. Although memory of the 8-8-88 is a collective memory that most survivors may internally feel in their bodies, this memory is far from being taken instantly as objectivity. It is also hypothesized that there is no such thing as a universal meaning of the 8-8-88 memory, insofar as its meaning and its interpretation is conflated with subjectivities of the

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<sup>68</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton Company: 2006), 558.

<sup>69</sup>The Lacan Online, "Shades of Subjectivity – I," accessed October 06, 2015, <http://www.lacanonline.com/index/2013/07/shades-of-subjectivity-i/>.

<sup>70</sup> The Lacan Online, "Shades of Subjectivity – I."

Burmese survivors, who resist giving one meaning to it. How the memory of 8-8-88 is meaningful to each survivor depends on survivors' interpretations and reflections on it. Insofar as memory of the 8-8-88 has been reproduced, reinterpreted, and re-narrated based on different subjectivities of the Burmese survivors, this suggests that the meaning of the memory of the 8-8-88 is neither definite nor definitive. For instance, the words of Aung San Suu Kyi, suggest that for her, the importance of 8-8-88 is essentially a remembrance of her political responsibility inherited from her assassinated father (General Aung San). Her father's death was followed by that of her elder brother in Inya Lake near her house. By maintaining her imaginary self as a "daughter of my father"<sup>71</sup>, Suu Kyi may view herself reflexively as her father's surrogate. She expresses that the 8-8-88 is meaningful to her because it is a second attempt for Burmese independence; the first attempt being the effort of her father. Probably, Suu Kyi feels from inside her body the indispensability of the 8-8-88 and the assassination of her father. Such bodily experience of trauma and interpretation inspire her to represent herself as a substitute for her father.

However, this reflexive account of memory of the 8-8-88 drawn from Suu Kyi does not serve as the definite meaning of the 8-8-88. This theoretical consideration permits other survivors to resist and reinstate a very different memorial account than Suu Kyi's. Although the 8-8-88 is collective trauma to which survivors have constantly felt a trauma from within their bodies e.g. Suu Kyi and the others, there is no absolute narrative or universal account of the event. Besides Suu Kyi, the memory of Nilar Thein, currently a prominent political activist and a survivor of the 8-8-88, sent to prison for her protest against the military regime is also significant. Shortly before the Saffron Revolution in 2007, she gave birth to a daughter, Phyu

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<sup>71</sup> The Radio Free Asia, "Burmese Detained on 1988 Anniversary," accessed October 07, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/88-anniversary-08092008080330.html>.

Nay Kyi Min Yu (Sunshine).<sup>72</sup> While writing about her, *Irrawaddy* describes her political activism as an ‘investment’ for her daughter’s future, and quotes her as saying that “we want her to grow up in a just, democratic society, free from fear and conflict.”<sup>73</sup> While Suu Kyi views herself as if her father’s political spirit is still alive in her body, Nilar Thein views of herself as a mother who invests for her daughter’s future. In other words, while Suu Kyi likely demonstrates herself in a ‘phallic’ image, with a sense of manhood embodied in her female body, Nilar Thein’s view of herself is very typical of womanhood and motherhood.

Marianne Hirsch proposes her conceptual notion, ‘post-memory’, to describe the way that the next generation inherits its ancestors’ traumas. She explains that “post-memory describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before.”<sup>74</sup> She continues that “post-memory’s connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.”<sup>75</sup> There is a tendency that the consciousness of a generation might be displaced, even evacuated by their ancestors’ narratives, which defies the possibility of deconstructing and reconstructing the narratives of the ancestor.<sup>76</sup> It is argued that post-memory has different characteristics than memory. For Hirsch, memory is an experience that cannot be easily passed on to others.<sup>77</sup> By way of contrast, post-memory produces its affective force and generates psychic effects, which can be internalised by and absorbed in others’ imaginations.<sup>78</sup> The next generations can imagine

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<sup>72</sup> The Safe World for Women, “Burma: Nilar Thein – Freed in January 2012,” accessed October 06, 2015, <http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/global-news/asia/burma/312-nilar-thein.html>.

<sup>73</sup> The Irrawaddy, “A Very Special Kind of Courage,” accessed October 07, 2015, [http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=8490&page=1](http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=8490&page=1).

<sup>74</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>75</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.

<sup>77</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 31.

<sup>78</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 31.

and internalise the trauma of previous generations because post-memory is transferred to them. Although trauma allows different generations to connect, it is entirely the next generation's authority to interpret, internalise, deconstruct, and re-narrate the memory that they have inherited from ancestors.

From Hirsch's suggestion, we should try to interrogate whether there will be an attempt made by 'the generation after' to deconstruct and re-narrate their ancestors' memory. For instance, as survivor and prominent human rights activist, Khin Ohn Mar, said "we cannot afford to simply pass this struggle on to the next generations for them to continue, we have to conclude it now in this generation."<sup>79</sup> According to his statement, there will be no 'post-memory' because survivors choose to retain memory only in their generation, and in their bodies, by deciding not to pass it to the next generation. Hirsch's proposal of the post-memory may also not be inaccurate in the case of Waihnin Pwint Thon, a young political activist and a daughter of the 88 Generation Student leader, Mya Aye. Pwint Thon gave a speech at a conference of the UK Labour Party in 2010 by recalling Suu Kyi's speech delivered at the west gates of the Shwedagon Pagoda on 26th August 1988.<sup>80</sup> She recalled the memory of her father's political activism during 1988 as a motivation underlying her campaign and admitted that her father is her greatest inspiration.<sup>81</sup> As a 'hinge generation' or a post-violence generation, it appears that Pwint Thon has not really defied memory of her ancestors, e.g. Suu Kyi and Mya Aye, because the memory of the ancestor is directly her inherited memory.

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<sup>79</sup> The Chinland Guardian.com, "Activists Remember Anniversary of 8888 Massacre," accessed October 07, 2015, <http://www.chinlandguardian.com/index.php/news/item/767-activists-remember-anniversary-of-8888-massacre>.

<sup>80</sup> The Burma Partnership, "Waihnin Pwint Thon Speaks for Burma and Political Prisoners at the UK Labour Party Conference," accessed October 07, 2015, <http://www.burmapartnership.org/2010/09/waihnin-pwint-thon-speaks-for-burma-and-political-prisoners-at-the-uk-labour-party-conference/>.

<sup>81</sup> The BurmaNet News, "The Guardian (UK): The legacy of Burma's Generation 88 – Waihnin Pwint Thon," accessed October 07, 2015, <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2010/08/09/the-guardian-uk-the-legacy-of-burmas-generation-88-%E2%80%93-waihnin-pwint-thon/>.

Perhaps ‘post-memory’ also sheds light on the case of Htein Lin, a survivor of the 8-8-88 and a Burmese artist who has lived in London. He returned to Burma in 2013 and had a chance to meet a number of former political prisoners. While there, Htein Lin collected the experiences of those ex-prisoners including himself and displayed them in an artwork called ‘A Show of Hands’<sup>82</sup> (Figure 4). ‘A Show of Hands’ was the centerpiece of a multimedia art exhibition called ‘The Story Teller’ at the Goethe-Institut in Rangoon in 2015. “A Show of Hands is a multimedia work. It combines sculpture, in the plaster of Paris arms, photographs of the making process, videos which record both the plastering, and the past, their experience in jail. There are texts cataloguing the prisoners and the years they sacrificed in jail.”<sup>83</sup> The artist has expressed that the aim of this artwork is not only to commemorate the 8-8-88, but also to communicate memory of the 8-8-88 to the next generation through artwork. This is made evident in a press interview, when he stated “I just want to leave stories for the next generation, to let them know that, ‘your grandparents and dads did this for your country,’”<sup>84</sup> It is possible to say that his expression coincides with Hirsch’s theory of ‘post-memory’; an affective and deep transmission of ancestral memory to the next generation. The artist has also expressed the view that Burma has been torn since Ne Win rose to power in 1962, and the plaster used in his artwork is a symbol that represents healing the country. The artist used the plaster because of his memory of an accident in London where he fell from a bicycle and needed his forehead bandaged with plaster. The bicycle accident inspired him to reflect on art as an activity that can generate the power of spiritual healing.<sup>85</sup> Plasters that the artist cast from the forearms of 405 political

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<sup>82</sup> The Htein Lin.com, “A Show of Hand,” accessed October 07, 2015, <http://www.hteinlin.com/a-show-of-hand/>.

<sup>83</sup> The Htein Lin.com, “A Show of Hand.”

<sup>84</sup> The Irrawaddy, “Hands of Hardship: Artist Htein Lin Spotlights Political Prisoners’ Travails,” accessed October 07, 2015, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/culture/hands-of-hardship-artist-htein-lin-spotlights-political-prisoners-travails.html>.

<sup>85</sup> The Htein Lin.com, “A Show of Hand.”



prisoners as an element of display in ‘A Show of Hands’ are symbols of the nation healing.<sup>86</sup> The artist even expresses that his artwork is a response to a commemoration on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1988 uprising; “I [Htein Lin] have found many arms at memorial events and celebrations. As I have plastered my subjects, old memories and even old allergies have returned; a former prisoner who suffered a bad allergy to water while in jail found a similar rash builds up under her damp cast.”<sup>87</sup>



Figure 4: A Show of Hands (Htein Lin)

(<https://asiancorrespondent.com/2015/08/from-guerrilla-warrior-to-artist-an-interview-with-the-storyteller-of-yangon/>)

Htein Lin’s ‘A Show of Hands’ has received positive responses from other survivors of the 8-8-88. For instance, Ko Ko Gyi, a former political prisoner and a leader of the 1988 pro-democracy uprising, comments on his work as “a collection of hands that collectively tried to push the country forward with their lives.”<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Ma Thida, a former political prisoner and

<sup>86</sup> The Htein Lin.com, “A Show of Hand.”

<sup>87</sup> The Htein Lin.com, “A Show of Hand.”

<sup>88</sup> The Irrawaddy, “Hands of Hardship.”

the president of the democracy group PEN International Myanmar, comments that Htein Lin's work is rendered as a visual medium and equally as a document recording the nation's repressive memory.<sup>89</sup> As the chapter is interested in the relationship between collective trauma and the body in the case of survivors of 8-8-88, a possible perspective is that the hand symbolises trauma that continues in the survivor's body. The hand is seen as visual medium for audiences to grasp the traumatic Real felt by survivors. It aids the audience to sense the bodily experience of these traumas. The artwork is a visual medium that allows its audiences to sense, grasp, and mutually feel the collective experience of the 8-8-88 survivors. The hand-image, when uploaded in social media in order to reach diasporic Burmese including Burmese survivors living in exile, has become an effective medium in the digital age, assisting in maintaining collective trauma among the 8-8-88 survivors. Htein Lin confesses that he had never even imagined that there would be such technology available for him to maintain collective trauma with his 88 friends in cyberspace.<sup>90</sup>

In conclusion, this section mainly argues that massacre on August 8th 1988 is maintained by the survivors living in Burma and in exile as a collective trauma. In accordance with the literatures on trauma and memory cited earlier, this chapter has identified the massacre as a collective trauma which survivors have constantly felt in their bodies. As long as language is incapable of representing the Real, it is hypothesised that collective trauma felt through the body is also the Real because 'the body that feels trauma' cannot be symbolised by words. It continues with the view that survivors have sensed and felt the Real in their bodies. The section then moves on to ask whether collective trauma has contributed to the formation of Burmese

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<sup>89</sup> The Irrawaddy, "Hands of Hardship."

<sup>90</sup> The Irrawaddy, 'Hands of Hardship: Artist Htein Lin Spotlights Political Prisoners' Travails', accessed October 07, 2015, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/culture/hands-of-hardship-artist-htein-lin-spotlights-political-prisoners-travails.html>.

survivors' subjectivity. In response, Lacan defines subjectivity as a sense of self, which enables the subject to resist universalism of meaning and which permits subjects to resist every ground of social meaning. Furthermore, this section also urges a debate around the term post-memory, which is initiated by Marianne Hirsch in order to test Hirsch's hypothesis in the context of the political reality of Burmese survivors. As a result, Hirsch's post-memory has the potential to become a positive explanatory mode in some scenarios while there are some scenarios to which her post-memory does not contribute.

### **Reflecting the Case Study**

In this section, the chapter draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Žižek's political translation of Lacan's work to highlight the politics of the Burmese survivor. In concert with the theoretical proposals made in Chapter 1, I argue that, there are five main points worth taking into consideration when discussing the Myanmar case. The first is that the junta's socialist vision is an ideological fantasy that eventually breaks down when the Real reveals itself. The second is that there is a tension between the Ideological-Trauma and the Real-trauma, with the former used to justify the use of violence by the junta, and the latter referring to a trauma that is felt in the body of survivor; a trauma which is impossible for language to represent. This directs us to the third point, which is that we can make a link with Lacan's split subjectivity, which results in the location of trauma being split between conscious and unconscious, as the thesis argued in Chapter 1. Testimony of the Burmese survivors shows the split location of trauma. The fourth point is that the Lacanian concepts of *jouissance* and death drive are bound together, highlighting that political opposition against the junta reflects survivors' subjectivity in the context of their

political resistance. The fifth point develops the fourth by making a link to Lacan's notion of act and desire. It urges the Burmese survivors to ask whether their political mobilisations conform with their desire.

First, since its inception, the junta government has ruled Myanmar with a socialist vision, but since the late 1980s, the consequences of this vision have often been dismaying e.g. inflation, the rise price of goods and products, the mismanagement of national economy. Viewed from a Lacanian perspective, it can be argued that the BSPP's socialist vision is a lack to the supposedly true socialist vision but which the lack always already covers itself as the non-lack.<sup>91</sup> The lack gives the illusion of completeness, and constantly acts *as if* there is nothing missed out of the frame. The lack affords itself as the object cause of desire, this emphasis on the object of desire is theorised by Lacan as *object petit a* that has a function in presenting itself almost as 'the all' rather than 'the not-all'. According to Žižek, the *object petit a* indicates the missing element constituted in the object cause of desire.<sup>92</sup> Insofar as there is concealment of 'the missing element' constituted in the object cause of desire, it enables an issue to get problematized that the object cause of desire is far from completion and far from serving as a true cause of desire. Insofar as it consistently tries to demarcate itself from the lack and the excess, the object cause of desire that appears as 'the all' is deception and fantasy, in other words, the *object petit a* behaves psychoanalytically as a fantasy function (Chapter 1).

It can be argued that the junta's socialist vision is the *object petit a*, because it encourages people of Myanmar to view it as desirable. Following the logic of the *object petit a*, which aims to foreclose itself from lack and excess, the Burmese may consider the junta's socialism as the

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<sup>91</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Universal Exception: Selected Writings, Volume Two*, ed. Rex Butler et al. (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 78.

<sup>92</sup> Žižek, *The Universal Exception*, p. 79.

very object cause of desire. In other words, they have thought that the junta's socialist administration is complete and politically desirable, which means that it is the administration that seems to endorse its grand accomplishment, presenting itself to its population as the very object cause of desire, and closing itself entirely off from lack and excess. The Burmese believed in this reality of socialism that envisioned itself as 'the all' and sustained this fantasy since 1962 until they encountered the Real in the late 1980s embodied in the economic mismanagement, the inflation, poverty, etc. that made them realise that the reality that they had lived for so long was 'the not-all'. The next step after encountering the traumatised Real was to separate from this fantasy and to traverse the fantasy by protesting against the junta government. Žižek suggests that 'social fantasy' is fundamentally a social error because fantasy is basically non-universalisable.<sup>93</sup> It is plausible to argue following Žižek's ultrapolitics that when the party members such as the BSPP promises that the country's administration will be governed by the principle of socialism,<sup>94</sup> history rather depends on the subjective interpretation of the party members. This precisely means that what is implemented across entire nation is the socialist ideology that has been predisposed by the subjective interpretation of the leaders. When the Real takes place, such a subjective interpretation, or, the leader's vision begins to reveal itself eventually as a fantasy to the subjects.

Second, following an argument in chapter 1, Lacanian approach suggests that the Real does exist but it is impossible for subjects to represent it linguistically. Following the creative reading of Lacan suggested by Žižek, this enables the thesis to formulate 'the Real-trauma'. Conceptually, the Real-trauma refers to the psychic affect that disturbs the mentality of subjects including their bodies, and so subjects are not able to pass on what they truly suffer to others.

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<sup>93</sup> Žižek, *The Universal Exception*, 90.

<sup>94</sup> Žižek, *The Universal Exception*, 69.

The Real-trauma is a category of trauma that the body can feel or experience but refuses to comprehend through language, even resisting the signification of meaning, whereas the Ideological-Trauma is one that tries to give and provide a clear meaning of trauma to others. The theoretical formulation here is that, at its core, the Real in its relation to the subject cannot yet be symbolised; “the Real is produced as a residue, a remnant, a leftover of every signifying operation.”<sup>95</sup> Ultimately, a key demonstration of this point lies in the relationship between trauma and the consequences of the psychological effects produced by trauma (painful memory, collective memory, displacements, paranoia, repetitions, and so on) on subjects’ bodies.

To confirm our theory, it can be said that in the aftermath of the massacre on 8-8-88, it is impossible for Burmese pro-democracy survivors such as Min Zin, Aung Din, Khin Saw Win, and Aung San Suu Kyi to express the totality of their trauma. The previous section shows that testimony of the ‘pro-democracy survivors’ clearly reflects their individual and collective traumas. To demonstrate that 8-8-88 has an element of collective trauma, I show survivors’ testimonies of the local Burmese and those living in the diaspora in order to show memory of survivors and how they speak of trauma of massacre. In the previous section, the chapter also follows Shoshana Felman’s work which suggests that trauma affects individual’s bodily experience. The body cannot evade pains, violence, and temperament discontents. This observation has led the chapter to argue that trauma is far from fully representable and entirely elucidated in language; however its characteristic which can be taken by the Lacanian as ‘the not-all’ is something that the subjects feel, perceive, and sense in their bodies. As it has been argued that the Real is a leftover and remnant by which subjects are emotionally affected, the chapter highlights that the collective trauma of Burmese pro-democracy survivors is explained as

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<sup>95</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 1989), 206.

the bodily experience, and they continue to feel it, silently and privately, in bodies. It is far from possible for the Real-trauma characterised as the subject's unbearable pain as 'the not-all' to be translated entirely into the symbolic texture of language. It nonetheless seems plausible to suggest that 'the not-all' is something that is felt and perceived deeply inside psyches and bodies of Burmese 'pro-democracy survivors'.

Third, the first chapter argued that trauma is both conscious and unconscious, difficult to locate, yet at the same time it can be recognised as a location of thought. Lacan emphasises this in his teaching, which maintains that a subject's thought relies upon the unconscious, and not simply the conscious thought identified by Descartes as *Cogito*. Bruce Fink suggests that "the Cartesian subject is characterised by what Lacan calls 'false being'".<sup>96</sup> When the Cartesian subject expresses that "I am thinking", this assumes theoretically that thinking and being coincide with one another. By way of contrasting Descartes, Lacan doubts whether or not such thinking and being coincide. Fink's interpretation implies that Lacan seems to discuss subjectivity differently than Descartes, in part at least because Descartes overlooks the subject's thought in the unconscious. Therefore, a discussion of Lacanian subjectivity is incomprehensible without taking into account his treatment of the unconscious. On this subject, Lacan argues that "Freud tells us that the thought processes are only known to us through words, what we know of the unconscious reaches us as a function of words."<sup>97</sup> Lacan continues that the unconscious occupies its place in language or when it is articulated and passed into words. It is under this recognition that Lacan emphasises that the unconscious has the structure of language.<sup>98</sup> In theory, Lacanian subjectivity strays in between conscious and the unconscious, or, in between

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<sup>96</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (New Jersey and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 43.

<sup>97</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 37.

<sup>98</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 38.

the false sense of self provided by the conscious, and the subject's fixity and consistency of thought posited in the unconscious.

As suggested in Chapter 1, if one is sensitive to the difference between conscious and the unconscious, one will be able to appreciate what Lacan meant when he suggested that the nature of subjectivity is that of 'split subjectivity'.<sup>99</sup> This theory offers a crucial point that the subject's expression of his or her idea becomes blurred and it is not clear whether it is the expression that comes from conscious or from the unconscious. The subjectivity is 'the subject's double', that is, "the between-I who is both his ego and not his ego"<sup>100</sup> that defines the essence of the subject's existence. Lacanian psychoanalysis refuses to take the subject's enunciation of thought through language as the subject's location of thought which is rather located in the unconscious. Lacan's writings on psychoanalysis caution us that human interactions such as laughter, jokes, appetite, and so on may actually be located in the unconscious. For instance, we may enjoy reading a book not because the story written in that book is fun, but we enjoy it because it triggers a childhood memory in us and that makes us unconsciously nostalgic, in turn triggering positive sensations about that book. Another example is people who want to go to a restaurant for dinner after office hours. They may not realise that they want to eat at the restaurant not because food there is better than at home, but because they may not know themselves that they just do not want to return home yet, or they may not know themselves that they just want to relax after their work responsibilities, or they may not know themselves that they just want to enjoy the decoration at the restaurant that makes them relaxed, and so on.

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<sup>99</sup> Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 45.

<sup>100</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book III 1955-1956*, trans. Russell Grigg (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 194.



This chapter follows Lacan's guidance that, in relation to subjectivity and the unconscious, the unconscious has the same structure as language. It adopts Lacan's teaching in order to better understand the testimonies made by Burmese pro-democracy survivors. I maintain that Lacan's theoretical framework is instrumental to 'psychoanalyse' or 'read the mind' of the Burmese pro-democracy survivors. The chapter proceeds by illustrating survivors' testimonies. As a result, it is crucial to note that survivors' testimonies resonated with Lacan's theory of the unconscious, conscious, language, and the enunciation of thought. It is reiterated in every case study of the thesis including the Myanmar case that the formation of pro-democracy survivor's subjectivity in the aftermath of violence and massacre is to some extent influenced by trauma and painful memories attached to that abhorrent event.

This is exemplified by the testimony of pro-democracy survivors such as Min Zin, Khin Saw Win, and Min Ko Naing, which demonstrates that survivors have never forgotten the way that the massacre has disrupted their lives. However, in interrogating the way that the trauma has been expressed, there is no clear-cut answer as to whether such expression indeed comes from the survivor's conscious or their unconscious. One conclusion is that it is impossible to ignore the significance of both conscious and unconscious when considering the way trauma has been expressed. As a psychoanalyst, and in his dealing with the psychological disturbance of his patients, Lacan was confident that it is the unconscious that stands as a representation of the subject's thought. Lacan used the example of the Mobius strip to describe the relationship of the conscious and the unconscious, a description summarised by Fink as: "if you draw a long enough line along any side, you eventually wind up on the flip side due to the twist in the strip. Yet there is an at least locally valid split between front and back, conscious and unconscious."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 45.

This theorisation cautions that while a survivor's testimony can be accounted for as representation of the survivor's position of trauma, it is hard to identify its location. It remains unclear whether survivors tell their story from the conscious or the unconscious; and a thought-provoking argument is precisely that Lacanian subjectivity is always-already 'split subjectivity'.

To affirm our theory about the politics of survivors, it is worth repeating survivors' testimony the chapter cited earlier. Take Min Ko Naing's testimony, for instance, when he says that "today [8-8-88] is the day when we came out among the explosives and cheered our slogan. We were beaten by the butts of guns and batons on the street during our demonstration."<sup>102</sup> This testimony shows that Min Ko Naing is fully conscious to the massacre because he remembers clear details of the massacre, such as that "today is the day when we came out among the explosives and cheered out slogan". But the perplexity of his testimony is highlighted when he says "we were beaten by butts of guns and batons on the street during our demonstration". In the second statement, it is clear that Min Ko Naing thinks of himself as victim rather than perpetrator because he claims that he and the others were beaten by butts of guns and batons. However, it is unclear whether his understanding of himself as a victim of a massacre originates from his conscious or his unconscious. His view of himself as victim may well be understood as originating in the conscious insofar as we suspect that he may organise, edit, and change his words (script) prior to giving a testimony. If we have followed Lacan's theorisation of the unconscious all along, however, it is nonetheless plausible to say that his view of himself as victim is connected with his unconscious in the sense that he might 'slip' or 'stumble' his personal thought, feeling, and emotion into his testimony without preparing a script in advance. The essential argument here is that Min Ko Naing's subjectivity is the 'split subjectivity' and the

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<sup>102</sup> The Irrawaddy, "Min Ko Naing's 88 Uprising Video Tribute."

difference between conscious and unconscious is irresolvable. The crucial point here is that Lacan's teaching makes us sensitive to words and language because it is unclear whether the speaker, or, in this case, the survivor is speaking about the massacre from the conscious or the unconscious. Applying Lacan's teaching to the survivor's testimony opens up the possibility of inaugurating a gap between conscious and the unconscious internal to one's subjectivity, and through this, the possibility of interrogating the position of trauma.

Fourth, in addition to the connection between trauma and the formation of subjectivity that proceeds through the embodiment of trauma in survivors' bodies, including the position of it in the conscious and the unconscious, this thesis suggests that in the case of Myanmar there is the possibility to view survivors' subjectivity in relation to the terms *jouissance* and death drive. In short, death drive is significant in grasping Lacan's ideas about the formation of subjectivity. It is conceptually problematic, however, because it renders itself 'impassable' as a site of the 'Thing' articulated as the 'being-without-signifier'.<sup>103</sup> Death drive is the initial instinct of the subject that produces itself beyond the chain of signifiers, and the existence of a subject that cannot be designated or tangibly nominated in the system of signification. Despite the way in which the meaning of the world is formed by the system of signifiers, death drive is exposed by Lacan as a peculiarity of existence that evades all significations. He goes on to suggest that "as soon as we have to deal with anything in the world appearing in the form of the signifying chain, there is somewhere which is beyond of that chain, the *ex nihilo* on which it is founded and articulated as such."<sup>104</sup> Death drive unveils itself in the formation and creation of extraordinary subjects of experience that are alien to the signifying chain, metamorphosing themselves as the creation of extraordinary 'being-unusual-towards-others'; the rise of extraordinary beings out of

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<sup>103</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 263.

<sup>104</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 262.

nothing; the *ex nihilo*. It is implied in Lacan's teaching that the subject who experiences death drive is the subject who is overwhelmed by *jouissance*, an inventory concept referring to an emotional mixture of pain and pleasure, generating for the subject a surplus enjoyment.<sup>105</sup> Death drive immersed in *jouissance* eventually creates the subject's experience differently than others. This explains why this subjectivity is strange or even bizarre to others because *jouissance* in relation to death drive creates a form-of-life daring to face death. Lacan explains death drive in relation to *jouissance* as "the will to destruction, to make a fresh start, and the will for an Other-Thing".<sup>106</sup> Such being that dares to face death can be offered as an explanation of why *jouissance* is rationalised by Lacan as the pain-in-pleasure and comparatively as a surplus enjoyment.

The case of Myanmar develops further our discussion of the politics of survivors carried out through a Lacanian theoretical framework. In this chapter, I have suggested that the Burmese 'pro-democracy survivor', in their struggle against authoritarianism, can be understood as subjects embodied with *jouissance* and death drive. Facing violence in 1988 and emerging as survivors after the incident, adjacent to death and trauma, it can be said that pro-democracy survivors have insisted on joining opposition movements and campaigning for democracy in the last 30 years. Amid the government's intimidation and sporadic crackdown on protestors, it reminds us of Lacan's theory of *jouissance* and death drive that explains that those survivors probably have enjoyment in political protest despite the fact that they know they are facing death. Lacanian theory suggests that, in protesting, pro-democracy survivors feel pleasure mixed with pain. Such intermingled emotions of 'pain in pleasure' points out the possibility that these survivors are identified as the form-of-life that dares to face death. Likewise, pro-democracy

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<sup>105</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 233.

<sup>106</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 262.

survivors' subjectivities are the 'being-unusual-towards-others' because of their enjoyment and acceptance of facing death, encroachment, arrest, violence, and so on. Such subjectivity, which is produced out of preparedness to confront the government's imposition of violence and death, evades the usual enjoyments e.g. sightseeing, camping, reading, swimming, playing, and walking and so on. In other words, overwhelmed with death drives and *jouissance*, the subjectivities of Burmese pro-democracy survivors, such as the 88 Student Generation, are seen from a Lacanian perspective as surplus-enjoyment that evades usual enjoyments. This leads to the suggestion that their enjoyments are the Thing or the being-without-signifier. In this fourth point, the chapter explores the possibility that *jouissance* and death drive are embodiments of pro-democracy survivors' subjectivities.

Fifth, Lacanian psychoanalysis evokes the question of desire in relation to the subject's political action. Žižek argues that Lacanian concept of the (Lacanian) act "aims at not a mere displacement/resignification of the symbolic coordinates that confer on the subject his or her identity, but the radical transformation of the very universal structuring 'principle' of the existing symbolic order".<sup>107</sup> This is implied that the principle of political action prescribed in Lacanian psychoanalysis draws on the tension between action and desire. Lacan challenges this perception in one of his seminars when he asks how we can make sure that one's action is in conformity with one's desire?<sup>108</sup> In other words, how can the subject make sure that its political action conforms with its desire? Lacan implies that when the subject is confronted with a signifier or even forced to act in conformity with signifiers such as the junta, authoritarianism, military constitution, and so on, the political action of the subject is far from conforming with desire.

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<sup>107</sup> Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 220.

<sup>108</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 386, 397.

This means that the conformity between the subject's action and its desire is situated only insofar as the subjects split and break away from those signifiers.<sup>109</sup> According to Lacan, political action through which the subject splits from signifiers promises itself as the ethics of psychoanalysis.<sup>110</sup> The attitude of Lacanian leftism which is illuminated in Lacan's teaching delineates a shift from acting according to a moral principle or the pleasure principle determined by state regulation, to political action based on happiness, love, and sympathy.<sup>111</sup> This leads to suggestion that Lacan has shown through his teaching that he himself is a leftist by nature. When Lacan addresses that "the function of desire must remain a fundamental relationship to death,"<sup>112</sup> he is referring to the subject's death drive and *jouissance* in daring to face death, including the subject splitting from the signifier in order to undertake political action. This means that only under these conditions can the subject spontaneously ensure that their (political) action is in conformity with the subject's desire.

The chapter engages with this Lacanian theoretical perspective and suggests that the political attempts of Burmese 'pro-democracy survivors' can be reconciled with the Lacanian act because the aim is to disavow the junta's signifier. The objective of political action is to bring about a radical transformation of the existing symbolic order. The wish is to see a tide of political change from the junta's domination to mature democracy in which the election on November 2015 would determine the country's government. During the Saffron Revolution in 2007, in which the 88 Student Group rose to support street demonstrations, it can be said that to a certain extent, Burmese pro-democracy survivors acted in conformity with their desire. It is also evident in their support of Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the NLD, in the upcoming election, which

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<sup>109</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 390.

<sup>110</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 383.

<sup>111</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 373.

<sup>112</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 373.

suggests that to some extent despite constantly facing government repression, survivors of 8-8-88 have insisted on acting politically in respect to their desire. In point four, I argued that they are subjectivities that maintain their *jouissance* in readiness to face death. The fifth point asks whether or not their political actions conform with their desires. What is entirely absent from Lacan's discussion of political action is a strategy for political action. Lacan does not posit how memory and trauma are situated in political actions. This thesis attempts to fill this gap by suggesting that memories of 8-8-88 has been used, maintained, and inflected by pro-democracy survivors in their campaign for democracy. Memory of the massacre has not only influenced the memories of survivors, but also the way that such memories have been used and inflected by survivors in order to fulfil particular political objective. It is interesting to note here that the Burmese pro-democracy survivors' political tactic is to attempt to symbolise the Real to visibly represent the Real. This is because, in a typical Lacanian theory, the Real is an existence that is abstractly impossible to enter into the symbolic order and cannot be incorporated in discourse. A psychoanalytic approach based on Lacanian theory identifies the Real as exterior to language; however, the reality of political actions, protests and resistance such as in the case of Myanmar, demands reassessment of this issue. We learn from the cases of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar that instead of maintaining the traumatic Real as the non-symbolisable, perhaps pro-democracy survivors tactically and strategically 'symbolise the Real' as part of their political strategies.

## **Conclusion**

In a similar way to the other two case studies, the objective of this chapter is to highlight that survivors of violence and massacre remain active in politics. The Burmese people have been subordinated to military rule since 1962, but survivors of the massacre in 1988 are politically involved in protests against the junta in the present. Despite the fact that there are survivors who have associated with the junta, protests against the military government are mounting and more people have joined the protest. This was evident in the Saffron Revolution in 2007 when survivors of the 8-8-88 massacre actively assisted monks and students in street demonstrations. Despite the victory of the NLD opposition in the recent election, the party will have to confront and solve national economic and social issues: representative democracy alone cannot secure and sustain the population's prosperity. While the junta was responsible for the country suffering trauma and violence, representative democracy is far from 'a post-political utopian fantasy' (see Chapter 1) that could guarantee happiness for the masses.

The chapter also challenges the view developed in the literature on trauma and Lacanian psychoanalysis that body can perform itself as a site where trauma can be expressed. Trauma cannot find its place in the discursive practice performed by language because there is an insurmountable gap between them. The consequence of this gap is that language cannot function as a stand-in for trauma. This chapter follows this logic and proposes that it is the body that serves as a stand-in for trauma. Thus, developing the perspective put forward in the chapters on Vietnam and Cambodia, exploring the body as a site of the sensual experience suggests that it is the body that relates sensationally with the Real. The influence of trauma on the body is not fixed and immobile because survivors use their memory and trauma to protest against the government. In the case of Cambodia, for instance, this thesis suggested that truth is a story that



gains institutional acceptance. In the case of Myanmar, the chapter provides no debate on the question of truth, but assumed that truth distances itself from survivors' memory and trauma. This rather suggests that survivors' memory and trauma are not the elucidation of truth as a whole. The chapter rather intimates that memory and trauma, which are not the truth as such, are used and inflected for political reasons.

The primary focus of this chapter has been on the politics of survivors of the 8-8-88 massacre. In Myanmar, however, there are many other aspects of political and social life that relate to memory, trauma, and subjectivity. The many problems and forms of violence in the country relevant to religion, gender, and ethnic issues, are all fertile ground for future research. The problem of sectarian violence and the Buddhist execution of Muslim minorities; for instance, are seen as trauma in relation to religion. The issue can even be understood through Lacanian psychoanalysis, and it can even be said that the Buddhist is 'the big Other,' that provides no mercy to the Muslim minorities and that the Myanmar Buddhists seem to concede to 'the desire of the Other'. Other social problems in Myanmar are tied up with trauma, including issues such as gender, ethnicity, and particularly the suppression of internet users (bloggers), who use the web to campaign for democracy in Myanmar such as during the Saffron Revolution. Future research has to examine whether or not those issues have motivated survivors to exercise political resistance and to form political organisations to confront the existing political regime. Perhaps, after the rise of NLD, Myanmar may share a common future and a common challenge with her neighbour, Thailand. The country's future cannot be accomplished by conceding to 'the utopian fantasy' of trying to sustain principles of representative democracy because 'above the sky' the Real is 'out there' to descend to disrupt it. This issue will be central to my discussion of Thailand in this thesis, and it will be discussed further in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Five**

### **The Politics of Thai Survivors:**

#### **Remembering Massacre of October 06, 1976 and**

#### **‘The Three Towers of the Reals’**

### **Introduction**

This chapter continues our study of the politics of survivors by examining the case of Thailand following the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 (*Hok Tula*) massacre. It will proceed in a similar vein to the Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar cases by arguing that the incident led to conflicting memories and the use of memories of the massacre in order to pursue the political aims of survivors in the present. In other words, the case of Thailand demonstrates survivors’ conflicting memories, testimonies, stories, and commemorations, which can be illuminated by the conflict between ‘the pro-government survivor’ and ‘the pro-democracy survivor’.<sup>1</sup> In Lacanian terminology, the two conflicting sides use memory to symbolise the Real in order to further their political ideologies in the present. As I will elucidate on further below, some Thai historians have asked how the massacre is remembered, questioning how the massacre has become a cornerstone of survivors’ political activities, ideologies, and beliefs in the present. Given the antagonisms between survivors in giving testimony about the massacre, this suggests that the recovery of memories of the 6<sup>th</sup> October is politically motivated, with the competition between different narratives acting as an important backdrop. The recovery of memory has been used to

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<sup>1</sup> For the most inspiring and pioneering work for this relevant issue is Sudarat Musikawong, “Mourning State Celebrations: Amnestic Iterations of Political Violence in Thailand,” *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 17(5) (2010): 560-580.

pursue pro-democracy survivors' political objectives. As survivors are those who have been directly confronted with violence but not killed, their testimonies have legitimacy in the eyes of others. Testimonies about massacre overlap with survivors' other political tactics, reflecting the use of memory as part of political opposition. In response to this consideration, I propose that the massacre in Thailand is a Lacanian Real that receives- albeit problematic- symbolisation by Thai survivors. As long as the massacre is a Lacanian Real, its non-linguistic character can only receive partial symbolisation in the world of language. This suggestion should not detract from the main hypothesis of the thesis, which has emphasised survivors' use of memories in their political resistance against government.

This chapter proceeds in three main sections. The first section examines the academic literatures produced by liberal Thai historians, whose arguments are centred on the culture of impunity in the country, calling on those responsible to be prosecuted, and criticising the relationship between the military and the monarchy.<sup>2</sup> Their works also imply that the 6<sup>th</sup> October massacre must be hidden in the history of Thai politics in order that official memories can continue. The second section of the chapter pays attention to the scholarly works of survivors, and argues that their academic works reflect survivors' memories, testimonies, stories which they use to oppose the government's official memory on the one hand, and to give voice to the massacre, a hidden story of Thai history, on the other. The second section also argues that for students and scholars seeking the truth of the incident, listening to survivors' narratives does not also allow them to access such desire. The chapter will shed critical light on the relation between the survivors' position and that of the government position by using the 'Three Towers of the Reals' in line with a typical Lacanian reading, in which any attempt to symbolise the Real is

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<sup>2</sup> Duncan McCargo, "Network monarchy and legitimacy crises in Thailand," *The Pacific Review*, 18 (4) (2005): 499-519.

inevitably in vain. This triple face of the Reals brings out three main dimensions: the first of which is a hypothesis that resonates with Giorgio Agamben's 'bare life' in which one student is dragged outside the university and killed; the second is the label of the Thai student as a communist infiltration into the country; and the third assumes the existential quality of the Real inherent in the incident that goes beyond the first two towers.

### **The 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 in the Contemporary Context of Thai Politics: Forming Official Memory/Forgetting the Massacre**

In this section, the thesis aims to explore how 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 should be understood in the context of contemporary Thai politics. Forgetting the massacre of the 6<sup>th</sup> October is a significant part of the official memory of the Thai nation. Official memory in Thailand celebrates the historic roles of the generals, paramilitary groups, and the monarchy. Recovering memories of the massacre on 6<sup>th</sup> October is likely to erode the official memory of the nation. The written works of the liberal Thai historians that will be discussed below suggest that the massacre was carried out by the network of the military and the monarchy. It is for this reason that the Thai state has sought to silence and exclude this extraordinary history of massacre. 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 stands as a lesson that forgetting is crucial in order to ensure that official memory will continue. In this section, the thesis observes that 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 is regarded by liberal Thai historians as the missing element of Thai history. This means that its history, erased from official memory, is brought back to attention by the liberal historians. This intellectual movement has met with political obstruction, however, insofar as the history of the massacre is opposed not only to the official memory but also to Thai national identity.

On the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976, state and para-state forces including unofficial civilian forces such as the Border Patrol Police, the Village Scouts, and the Red Guards committed acts of violence against students and other activists gathering inside Thammasat University.<sup>3</sup> The military, the police, and paramilitary forces unexpectedly stormed the campus and shot at a peaceful gathering of students and activists with M-16s, rifles, pistols, and grenade launchers, bringing an end to the protest against the Thai elites.<sup>4</sup> In the midst of the turmoil, students called for the gun-fire to stop, but their requests were ignored. Some students who escaped the violence by diving into the Chaophraya River were shot down by naval vessels. The university campus was closed off and violence against students and protestors continued under the authority of armed police from the Crime Suppression Division, the Border Patrol Police, and the Special Forces Unit of Metropolitan Police.<sup>5</sup> Students and other protestors were unable to leave the campus because all of the exits were blocked by the police. In this sealed environment, it was easy for police to drag students out of the university, where they hung them from the trees around the lawn of Sanam Luang, and began torturing them. The ruthless violence ended at 6pm due to the declaration of martial law under a new ruling body that went by the name of the National Administrative Reform Council (NARC). The NARC officially reported that 3,059 people were under arrest due to being communists intending to overthrow the monarchy, while 46 people were killed and more than 180 people were physically injured. It is forty years since the massacre but the memory is still fresh, with historians recounting the memory on that day as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Giles Ji Ungpakorn, *Thailand's Crisis and the Fight for Democracy* (London and Melbourne: WDPress, 2010). Katherine Bowie, *Rituals of National Loyalty* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1997). Charles Keyes, *Trends in Southeast Asia: Democracy Thwarted: The Crisis of Political Authority in Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2015), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Giles Ji Ungpakorn and Sutachai Yimprasert, *State Crime in a period of crisis and change The 6th October 1976 fact finding and witness interviewing committee* (2001). Giles Ji Ungpakorn, *A Coup for the Rich Thailand's Political Crisis* (Bangkok: Workers Democracy Publishing, 2007), 83.

<sup>5</sup> Ungpakorn, *A Coup for the Rich*, 83.

On the brutality of the regime, it was at the time reported that helicopters fired into the Thammasat campus where unarmed students had assembled. Officials at Siriraj Hospital said that around 130 persons were killed or wounded. This was the first real bloody encounter between two antagonist parties in modern Thai political history.<sup>6</sup>

Up until this day, none of the state and para-state groups who partook in the crackdown have accepted responsibility for it. Why has no-one taken responsibility for the crackdown, and why have the perpetrators not faced justice? One of the reasons is that as Thailand's neighbour, countries such as Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam fell like dominos, becoming communist, the fear of communism spreading to Thailand causes anxiety inside the elite factions that had contributed to structural reform in Thailand's domestic politics.<sup>7</sup> As long as Thai elite groups consisting of the military and the monarchy discern protestors as communists, Thai politics has been increasingly polarised between right-royalists and left-communists.<sup>8</sup> Fear of communism inside the royalist faction explains why violence against protestors, politically accused of adopting communism and overthrowing the Thai monarchy, is an act that can be forgiven and forgotten by the elites. Forty years after this bloodbath, violence to protect the longstanding Thai monarchy

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<sup>6</sup> KobKua Suwannathat-Pian, *Kings, Country and Constitutions: Thailand Political Development 1932-2000* (New York: Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 253. See also: Ross Prizzia and Narong Sinsawasdi (et al), *Thailand: Student Activism and Political Change* (Bangkok: Allied Publications, 1974). Charnvit Kasetsiri and Thamrongsak Phetlertanand, *From 14 to 6 October (Jaak Sibsii theung Hok Tula)* (Bangkok: Foundation for Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, "Survivors of Thailand's 1976 student massacre shine light on nation's 'shadow history,'" accessed November 09, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-06/survivors-of-1976-student-massacre-shine-light-'shadow-history'/7907202>.

<sup>8</sup> Tyrell Haberkorn, *Revolution Interrupted: Farmers, Students, Law, and Violence in Northern Thailand* (London and Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 12.

serves to explain the pardon granted to the military and para-military officers.<sup>9</sup> Kobkua Suwannathat observes that the monarchy's acceptance of the right's violent acts against protestors could be discerned as favouritism bestowed upon them by the monarchy as he explains that:

The Village Scouts was founded under the king's patronage and the royal family members were often founded under the King's patronage and the royal family members were often seen in the Village Scout uniform performing official functions of the movement; in 1976 the King himself made a highly publicised visit to a weapons training camp run by the Red Guards and thus bestowing the royal approval to the movement. It was without doubt that His Majesty looked upon these rightist groups as defenders of the Thai way of life and against increasing threats from leftists and communists<sup>10</sup>

The monarchy's involvement in politics explains why the massacre of the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 must remain a political taboo even at a time when Thailand is aspiring to drive its country towards modernity.<sup>11</sup> Thai liberal historians have defined modernity in a Thai context in terms of democratisation, liberalisation and holding people accountable for crimes they commit. This liberal attitude may have led David Streckfuss to ask "why have we not heard about those responsible for the October 6, 1976 massacre?"<sup>12</sup> In answer to his own question, he suggested that public discussion of this issue without discretion is impractical because everyone's freedom

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<sup>9</sup> Haberkorn, *Revolution Interrupted*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> KobKua Suwannathat-Pian, *Kings, Country and Constitutions*, 256.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Keyes and Shigeharu Tanabe, *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory: Modernity and Identity in Thailand and Laos* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 24.

<sup>12</sup> David Streckfuss, *Truth on Trial in Thailand: Defamation, Treason, and Lèse-Majesté* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 278.

of speech is limited by their anxiety over Thailand's *lese-majeste*. Thus, in contrast to some liberals, fear of punishment under this harsh law curbs people's desire to find and talk about the truth of the massacre. For survivors and other traumatised people, this willingness to live in absolute ignorance is likely to be lifelong.<sup>13</sup> Until now, it is not only the Thai people but also the Thai government who have remained silent about responsibility for the events. Whereas Thai people refuse to know the truth, the Thai military government has denied a charge made against it over human rights abuses during the massacre, partly because members of the government want to secure their current political positions.<sup>14</sup> Despite this culture of silence, we should not rush to the conclusion that all Thai people are discouraged from talking about or discussing the events of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976. As long as there are some individuals, historians, and survivors who make the effort to commemorate the event and bring these issues to the attention of Thai society – 'in part to awake them' – then resistance to the official narrative persists.<sup>15</sup>

Silence about the massacre has included exemption from justice granted not only to the government, but also to the right wing groups who exerted violence.<sup>16</sup> It is necessary for the massacre to have been subdued, for the official history of the nation to blossom and continue as the dominant mode of national memory. Beyond everyone's expectation, however, the right wing government decided eventually to cancel all penalties not only to the right wing members but also to 'generously' extend this immunity to students, protestors, and survivors. The government may expect that their generosity in extending exemption to all parties including protestors, will immediately bring peace and reconciliation in Thai society; forgetting the massacre to move on with the official memory. Given this attitude, it is no surprise at all that

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<sup>13</sup> Streckfuss, *Truth on Trial in Thailand*, 279.

<sup>14</sup> Streckfuss, *Truth on Trial in Thailand*, 280-281.

<sup>15</sup> Streckfuss, *Truth on Trial in Thailand*, 281-282.

<sup>16</sup> Tyrell Haberkorn, "The Hidden Transcript of Amnesty: The 6 October 1976 Massacre and Coup in Thailand," *Critical Asian Studies* 47 (1) (2015): 44-68.



two months after the bloodshed at Thammasat University, the first amnesty law was passed on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1976 to prevent the prosecution to those who used violence against students and protestors inside the campus.<sup>17</sup> In order to let Thai society bury memory of the massacre in favour of official memory, the second amnesty law passed on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1978 allowed the release of all protestors by dismissing all charges against them.<sup>18</sup> In retrospect, Fabian Drahmoune was correct to suggest that those two amnesty laws were political measures through which the massacre was rationalised as political operation embedded in extra-constitutional enforcement and yet reflect Thailand's selective use of law and impunity for extra-judicial violence.<sup>19</sup> These two amnesty laws reflect the principles, strategies, and 'generosity' of a military government that has demanded that survivors and protestors forget the massacre as soon as possible, as if nothing catastrophic had ever happened in the Thai society.

At this point, it is worth examining what the official Thai memory actually is and how compatible it is with Thai history. To understand this, it is crucial to start with forms of unofficial Thai memory. Patrick Jory has observed that Thai historians have been dealing with these sensitive and vulnerable situations for more than half a century. Revealing the truth of the situation to Thai society- a truth which necessitates questioning the monarchy's political involvement- is highly sensitive as officials perceive it as an act of defamation as well as debauchery. Implicit in Jory's view is that revealing the truth of the massacre is impractical, blasphemous, and can only be discussed in private. This is because discussion of the massacre "is effectively unconstitutional, may count as a criminal offence, and in theory could also be regarded as act of treason. Not surprisingly, a long list of books deemed critical of the monarchy

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<sup>17</sup> Tyrell Haberkorn, *Revolution Interrupted: Farmers, Students, Law, and Violence in Northern Thailand* (London and Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Haberkorn, *Revolution Interrupted*, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> Fabian Drahmoune "Review: Tyrell Haberkorn: *Revolution Interrupted: Farmers, Students, Laws and Violence in Northern Thailand*." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31 (4) (2012): 144-147.

are officially banned in Thailand. Controversial events of the last 60 years involving the king are dangerous territory for Thai historians to tread and are treated with a high degree of self-censorship”.<sup>20</sup> As long as the unofficial history or memory of the Thai people is perceived by the mainstream as something aimed at damaging the reputation of the monarchy, it is discredited in relation to official memory as a consequence. Streckfuss is erudite in his explanation of the formation of Thai official memory and history:

The [Thai] official history is that of bright, shining faces, of great men whose names ring out as their accomplishments are proclaimed. Even more, the glorious times of a happy people are depicted: the general reaches down and pats a child on the head; the grandma, smiling, raises her hands in devotion and obeisance. Defamation-based law drives the hard history of Thailand into darkened streets, making it a fugitive, always on the run, meeting in shadows and sustained by rumour. Signs that critical commentary may appear, but if such commentary does appear – and here I speak about the monarchy – it is a coded language necessitating familiarity with a set of landmarks scattered through the political landscape but which few know how to correctly read.<sup>21</sup>

Streckfuss has pointed out that despite the four decades that have passed since the massacre, the truth of the incident has not been uncovered in Thai society. The fact that officials responsible for the crackdown have never been held accountable may explain the government’s propensity to resort to violence when managing recent conflicts such as the October 2008 and April to May 2010 crackdowns.<sup>22</sup> The elision of the October 1976 incident from official memory and the refusal to bring perpetrators to justice is to render past crimes irrelevant in the

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<sup>20</sup> Patrick Jory cited in Streckfuss, *Truth on Trial in Thailand*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Streckfuss, *Truth on Trial in Thailand*, 279.

<sup>22</sup> The Irrawaddy, “Buddhist Monks Lead Commemoration of 1976 Thai Massacre,” accessed November 09, 2016, <http://www.irrawaddy.com/news/asia/buddhist-monks-lead-commemoration-1976-thai-massacre.html>.

current state of Thai politics. Haberkorn implies that this can be read as a backlash of history and the culture of impunity in Thailand has produced an interconnection between past, present, and future; what remains a universal principle of Thai politics is that no responsible persons are interrogated or punished for violent actions in the past. Any disruption or interruption of the official memory is considered a threat to the norms and conventional attitudes of a majority of the Thai people.

As a consequence of this, Thai history textbooks do not offer critical analysis of the massacre. Many have worried about the absence of these events from mainstream Thai history textbooks, at a time when many Thai scholars from renowned universities in Thailand came forward to host commemorative events on the fortieth anniversary of the massacre.<sup>23</sup> Despite this, memory of the massacre has yet to obtain equal status in Thai national memory, which places emphasis on Thai nationalism under the approval of the Thai state. Chee Kiong Tong and Kwok Chan sum up Thai nationalism under approval of the Thai state when they argue that since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, modern Thai nationalism has been characterised by an effort to foster a Thai 'nation state' under the monarchy, which preserves Thai identity by excluding non-Thai ethnicities.<sup>24</sup> The Thai government's attempt to maintain Thai national identity produced in opposition to non-Thais ethnicities such as Chinese, Malaya, and Laos led to a clear division

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<sup>23</sup> The Prachatai English, "Thailand's top universities to commemorate 6 Oct Massacre," accessed November 09, 2016, <http://prachatai.org/english/node/6611>. Gerald Fry, Gayla Nieminen, and Harold Smith, *Historical Dictionary of Thailand* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 126. Project Gutenberg Self-Publishing Press, "6 October 1976 massacre," accessed January 19, 2016, [http://www.gutenberg.us/articles/6\\_october\\_1976\\_massacre#cite\\_note-Handley266-40](http://www.gutenberg.us/articles/6_october_1976_massacre#cite_note-Handley266-40). The Khaosod English, "Activist urges textbooks to include 'Oct 6 massacre,'" accessed January 19, 2016, <http://www.khaosodenglish.com/life/2013/10/07/1381149424/>. Patrick Jory, "Problems in Contemporary Thai Nationalist Historiography," *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, (3) (2003). Alex Schneider and Daniel Woolf, *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 5: historical writing since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 552.

<sup>24</sup> Chee Kiong Tong and Kwok Chan, *Alternate Identities: The Chinese of Contemporary Thailand* (Singapore: Time Academic Press, 2001), 78.

between Thai and foreign identities.<sup>25</sup> Under the government's standardisation of national identity, Thais are obliged to protect and fight for the monarchy and must not act in the interest of foreigners.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, Thai communism and radicalism are seen as symptoms of the collapse of Thai national identity. Communism is seen as a political movement initiated by non-Thai minorities, and typically regarded by the Thai elite as the Other. Thai communism tends to be predicated on the Chinese or 'Jek'<sup>27</sup> philosophy of Mao Tse-Tung from China, thus overthrowing the existing national identity established under the monarchy, in other words, by disrupting standard Thai identity.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the 6<sup>th</sup> October massacre is not a regular concern for the majority of Thai people and it is only commemorated by activists and survivors who experienced the incident.<sup>29</sup> Only a small number of people regularly participate in the annual commemorative event, while the majority of Thai people have never been officially informed of the incident. On October 2014, the commemoration was banned by the junta government,<sup>30</sup> which accused the commemorative event of eroding Thailand's atmosphere of friendship restored by junta since a coup d'état against the civilian government on May 2014. For some Thai political activists, the junta's order to ban the commemoration not only shows that Thailand's democracy has gone backwards,<sup>31</sup> but also that the majority of Thai people are not aware of the massacre. Despite

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<sup>25</sup> Kiong Tong and Chan, *Alternate Identities*, 78.

<sup>26</sup> Kiong Tong and Chan, *Alternate Identities*, p. 78. Radhika Desai, *Developmental and Cultural Nationalisms* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 185. Rachel Harrison and Peter Jackson, *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand* (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 217.

<sup>27</sup> Kasian Tejapira, "De-Othering Jek Communists: Rewriting Thai History from the Viewpoints of the Ethno-Ideological Other," in *Southeast Asia Over Three Generations: Essays Presented to Benedict R. O'G. Anderson*, ed. James Siegel et al. (New York and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 245-262.

<sup>28</sup> Desai, *Developmental and Cultural Nationalisms*, 186.

<sup>29</sup> The Thailand News, "University Bans Annual Commemoration of 1976 Student Massacre," accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.thailandnews.co/2014/09/university-bans-annual-commemoration-of-1976-student-massacre/>.

<sup>30</sup> The Nation Multimedia, "No political talk at Oct 6 ceremony," accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/No-political-talk-at-Oct-6-ceremony-30243640.html>.

<sup>31</sup> The Nation Multimedia, "No political talk at Oct 6 ceremony."

this, Thongchai Winichakul, a liberal Thai historian scholar and a survivor of the massacre, has encouraged Thai society to remember this massacre without anxiety, when he suggested that “commemoration is a form of challenge not only to the state but also to the whole generation of former radical activists of the 1970s themselves, to test the limits between silences and voices”<sup>32</sup>.

In conclusion, this section has examined the reasons why the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 has been excluded from official memory. One answer to this question is that 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 must be forgotten in order to allow the official memory of the nation to continue. The official memory of the nation signifies the history in which the military and the monarchy are celebrated as heroes to whom Thai people must owe gratitude. By way of contrast, the written works of liberal Thai historians suggest that an alliance between the military and the monarchy masterminded the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 massacre. Hence, to project a positive image of the alliance of military and monarchy, to continue the official memory of the nation, this history of the massacre must be forgotten. Forgetting the massacre is unacceptable for the liberal Thai historians who wish to continue the country’s journey to liberal modernity by holding the people responsible for the killings accountable. Moreover, as protestors are accused of being communists inspired by Mao in China and Stalin in the Soviet Union, the political movement of 6<sup>th</sup> October is considered as a threat to Thai identity. This political movement and its connections to non-Thai forms of identity is far from being accepted in official memory. The extraordinary exclusion of the massacre from textbooks and Thai collective consciousness upset Winichakul who laments the political necessity in commemorating the event; ‘to test the limits between remaining silences and expressing voices’.

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<sup>32</sup> The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, “Survivors of Thailand’s 1976 student massacre shine light on nation’s ‘shadow history’,” accessed November 09, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-06/survivors-of-1976-student-massacre-shine-light-'shadow-history'/7907202>.

This chapter argues that we need to think beyond Winichakul's words, however, by doubting whether breaking silences and expressing voices will immediately establish the truth of the incident. In the theory of the politics of survivors, one of our discussions is to the impossibility of language to incorporate the truth of the entire incident. Therefore, there remains another possibility, which is that when survivors recall memory of the killings, they may tend to recall memory only insofar as it is useful to their political movements in the present. They have subsequently used selectively recalled memories in order to serve their political interests and ideologies. At a time when some Thai people have shared a common interest with the liberal Thai historians about the truth of the 6<sup>th</sup> October massacre, my response to them in the next section will be that there is no truth of the massacre as a whole to definitively prove. The recovery of memory by some survivors such as Winichakul and others who use it politically to mobilise others/listeners, as well as the memory retrieved from the landscape of the past by Thai survivors is only selective and does not represent the truth of the whole incident.

### **The Use of Memory: Do Survivors' Testimonies Reflect the Truth of the Incident?**

This section offers a different analysis than the previous section. Whereas the analysis in the previous section highlighted the viewpoint of liberal Thai historians who wish 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 to be judged by the standards of liberal modernity, and the truth of the incident to be revealed to Thai society, my analysis in this section resumes my ongoing interest in the politics of survivors. I argue that a recovery of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 is the 'Real-trauma', while for the government, the killing of protestors- although traumatic- is an acceptable trauma, and thus can be identified as the 'Ideological-trauma'. The 'Real-trauma' is entwined with survivors' recovery

of memory, and the use of memory hostile to the government is interpreted as the use of memory as a strategy of political opposition. This goes with the theoretical assumption that language cannot narrate the massacre as a whole, and, in effect, narrating or giving a testimony about trauma is inevitably politically selective.

At this point, the sub-question that runs through this and other chapters whether the testimonies of survivors offer a truth of the incident itself? In this chapter, my sub-question opens a dialogue with the work of Thai political theorist, Chaiwat Satha-Anand whose work explores amnesia and the general views that Thai people have of the massacre. Satha-Anand's work shows that amnesia occurs as a form of collective forgetting because stories and narratives about the massacre are marginalised, and eventually erased from collective consciousness.<sup>33</sup> In his short essay published with *The Bangkok Post* in 2008, one of Satha-Anand's main considerations is to outline three kinds of amnesia that he claims represent the attitude of Thai people towards the massacre. The first kind of amnesia reflects the victim's psychological mechanism in avoiding retrieving the massacre in order to live in the present free from haunting memories, therefore, forgetting the past is a way to remedy painful memories. The second kind is the aggressor's amnesia, in which refusing to talk about the past is a way to secure and enjoy social privilege. The third kind is the most hypocritical one: it is a kind of collective amnesia in which Thai society establishes the massacre as a social taboo, so that people can deceive themselves that nothing detrimental to lives of the people has ever happened.

Following Satha-Anand's three kinds of amnesias, I suggest that there are four problematic points that we should address here. First, Satha-Anand's reflection shows a sharp distinction between amnesia and remembrance, silence and voice, speaking and unspeaking. The

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<sup>33</sup> Chaiwat Satha-Anand, "Collective Amnesia, A Disowning of Guilt," *The Bangkok Post* (2008).

problem arises from his analysis that collective amnesia is the way to forget a past that is difficult to forget. At this point, Satha-Anand does not consider that voice itself can also be an amnesia. Giving voice to a massacre can also be to forget the massacre at the same time. In other words, the problem is that speaking is an act that at the same time contains an unspoken element. Satha-Anand overlooks this ambiguity between voice and amnesia and the blurred line between speaking and unspeaking. Rather than taking into account this ambiguity, in which giving voice to the massacre can be at the same time a forgetting of the massacre, Satha-Anand's opinion simply suggests that forgetting takes the form of not speaking about the massacre. It is as if Satha-Anand is overoptimistic that the nation's amnesia can be broken simply by giving voice to the massacre. Unfortunately, this opinion is problematic because giving voice to the massacre can be an act that contains historical elements that remain hidden, forgotten, and amnesiac.

Second, when Satha-Anand urges Thai society to forget the massacre, his opinion risks being condemned by Thai liberal historians such as Tyrell Haberkorn, David Streckfuss, Patrick Jory, Thonchai Winichakul, and Somsak Jeamteerasakul as the privileged opinion of a westernised political theorist whose philosophy does not uphold the values of liberalism because to do so may prove harmful to his current position in Thai society. It is possible that those liberal historians may view Satha-Anand's work as a reflection of his personal desire to forget the massacre. Given his desire to forget the massacre, he then wrote a small philosophical work to get it disseminated in the Thai media in order to persuade audiences to join his path of forgetfulness. Although Satha-Anand's categorisation of three amnesias is profound, there remains a large doubt whether his philosophical reflection is useful for resisting the official memory of the Thai nation. As long as the Thai elite wants Thai society to leave the past behind



by only remembering memory that mirrors the glory of the nation and its the generals and kings, Satha-Anand's reflections are not a useful resource for political resistance because his work does not sufficiently direct us to challenge Thailand's official memory. Although his work claims to differ from the official memory, Satha-Anand may not know himself that his work assists the official memory to persist by other means. Satha-Anand may claim that his work offers a philosophical reflection on the massacre, but his pacifist-inspired view that avoids engaging with the official memory unfortunately renders it unable to challenge the official memory. In Satha-Anand's opinion, if Thai society must completely forget about the stories of the massacre as he assumes, his viewpoint will be offensive to others who believe that the truth of the incident is a matter of the utmost importance.

Third, Satha-Anand's view is guided by his longstanding belief in pacifism, a belief that is likely to shape his opinion about 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976. But the truth in Thai society is that Thai liberal political activists tend to embrace the responsibility to remember and commemorate the massacre. This means that Satha-Anand's belief in collective amnesia is not only politically passive but also does not effectively illustrate alternative opinions about the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 held by Thailand's liberally minded political activists. In comparison with my theoretical proposal about the Ideological-Trauma through which the Thai government excuses the killing of protestors on behalf of protecting the nation from communist infiltration, this Ideological-Trauma is even more politicised and better than Satha-Anand's belief in pacifism which drives him to blissful ignorance. In comparison with the Real-Trauma through which survivors and political activists attempt to alert Thai society to the history of the massacre, with the objective of challenging the nation's official memory, Satha-Anand's work is irresponsible. Ironically, Satha-Anand's work on collective amnesia may be something that both the Ideological-Trauma

and the Real-Trauma both condemn, as his passivity is both opposed to the official memory in which communists must be remembered as posing a threat to the Thai nation and political activists' desire to challenge official memory. In short, his pacifism and refusal of responsibility for remembering the massacre is opposed to both camps.

Fourth, Satha-Anand's reference to Winichakul's paper presentation at Thammasat University in November 2007 misconceives Winichakul's desire to use memory of the massacre to politically challenge the alliance of the monarchy and the military. Here our concern is that Winichakul, a survivor in a position of possessing a potentially reliable narrative, is placing the traumatic memory of the massacre in political terms. Unlike Satha-Anand's rejection of responsibility for political resistance, Winichakul seeks to recover memory for the sake of political activism. Indeed, the paper 'October 6 in the Memory of the Rightists: From Victory to Silence (Still Victorious), 1997-2006' (2007) shows Winichakul's critical rejection of the right wing's fragmentation of memory. That is to say, there is no such thing as a collective memory among the victorious side. Satha-Anand's interpretation, however, misreads Winichakul's critical viewpoint in such a way as to legitimise his ignorance of the past. Without taking into account Winichakul's subtle political interrogation of disparate memories among right wing members, Satha-Anand naïvely points out that Thongchai's research on members of the right wing is "due to its extreme political violence, generally the incident is disowned in public as part of a wounded history of modern Thailand".<sup>34</sup>

In my view, a view that may prove contentious, Winichakul's paper starts by unpacking different ways in which right wing activists, some of whom were responsible for the deaths of protestors, others of whom were not, see the massacre in multiple directions. Usually victims

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<sup>34</sup> Satha-Anand, "Collective Amnesia, A Disowning of Guilt."

and survivors view the right wing perspective as a monolithic bloc, but Winichakul's work is not a form of amnesia, or an attempt to erase memory of the massacre from Thai society, but rather it tries to alter the dominant perspective by highlighting and unpicking differences between the different memories of perpetrators. I see this as Winichakul's way of trying to cope with his indelible trauma, not only to understand what happens to his life, but also to carefully distinguish right wing members, who intended to kill him and did kill his dead comrades, from other members who did not. In effect, this critical interrogation reflects psychologically not only on how Winichakul has dealt with his own trauma, and extended his sympathy and probably ethical love to his former aggressors, but also to lay bare the divided memories within the right wing faction, which leads to the conclusion that there is no single collective memory among the former aggressors.

Evidently, among multiple memories of the right wing members, there are some who view the incident as a necessity measure to secure Thailand from communist infiltration, some are frustrated by the fact that they were used as puppets, some were reluctant to kill protestors; some view themselves as scapegoats while the true masterminds remain hidden; and some care not to remember this incident so they demand that others no longer talk about the incident either.<sup>35</sup> My interpretation of Winichakul's argument is that it encourages neither forgetting of the traumatic incident, nor a 'Thai exit' from the traumatic incident in the same way that Satha-Anand suggests. In contrast, he tries to bring this memory to the foreground in order to understand why former perpetrators wish to be silent about the incident. Implicitly, the answer is probably that those right wingers may wish to pretend that a monolithic form of memory is still possible. Breaking away from this bloc is not for the sake of political activism, but because the

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<sup>35</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, "October 6 in the Memory of the Rightists: From Victory to Silence (Still Victorious), 1997-2006" (2007)," cited in Satha-Anand, "Collective Amnesia, A Disowning of Guilt."

only way of preserving a unity of memory is through silence. By scrutinising this, Winichakul is showing a degree of sympathy with former aggressors who are victimised because they were ordered to kill students by more powerful people. At this point, Winichakul shows more awareness of the zone of indistinction between victim and perpetrator than Satha-Anand who does not mention this blurred boundary. With this snapshot of the divided memory of right-wing members, Winichakul's paper brings the wounded history, or memory, of the massacre to front in order to deconstruct the unity of memory among right wingers. This shows that Winichakul's use of memory seeks cause right wingers; collective memory to collapse. Satha-Anand's thin version of pacifism, however, is ignorant of Winichakul's radical approach of bringing the memory at front to deconstruct the right wing's impossible collective memory. He simply goes by the belief that 'generally the incident is disowned in public as part of a wounded history of modern Thailand', as if to pronounce that he is ready to forget everything relevant to the wounded memory of modern Thailand in order to preserve his pacifist belief whereas violence, trauma, and the memory of others are not his responsibility.

My interpretation of Winichakul's work in different opinion from Satha-Anand's at this point is not arbitrary. Winichakul, a survivor and anti-monarchical political activist, is interested in memorising and remembering the massacre rather than neglecting to speak about it. Memory of the traumatic incident is ambivalent, to remember it is to compensate for suffering, but to forget it completely is irresponsible and lacks moral courage. Winichakul knows this grammar of memorising a traumatic incident well. In January 2016, he expressed that 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 is an ambiguous memory, that is, it is a memory that is 'hard to remember, yet difficult to forget'.<sup>36</sup> To ponder 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 critically cannot rely on a distinction between the elite's refusal to

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<sup>36</sup> The Nation Multimedia, "Hard to remember, yet difficult to forget," accessed January 23, 2016, [http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2006/10/06/politics/politics\\_30015512.php](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2006/10/06/politics/politics_30015512.php).

speaking about memory and some radical Thais demanding to know the truth of the incident. In addition, we should avoid the common opinion that 6<sup>th</sup> October is an unsayable history and that Thai people are only allowed to speak about sayable history. At this point, I suggest that we need to avoid the distinction between 'sayable and unsayable' historical memory in Thailand. The reason is how could one ensure that unsayable history serves as the truth of the incident when such incident is narrated by survivors, a traumatised person? My hypothesis is that 6<sup>th</sup> October is no longer unsayable history, it is rather used exhaustively by political activists and liberal historians in Thailand to condemn legal unaccountability, to understand Thai's culture of impunity, and to seek to hold people responsible. Even though 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 is no longer an unsayable history, it is frustrating to hysteries, liberal Thai historians and political activists, simply because it is not promoted as the official memory. In order to preserve its historical dignity and mystical character, however, it is not necessary to promote it as the official memory. On the contrary, memory of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 cannot become official, because once it does, it will be affecting survivors' use of it. Its ambiguous character that survivors can exploit in order to challenge official memory will completely vanish. Therefore, in my opinion, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 is already a sayable history thanks to the activists, cyberspace, journals/articles, and leaked cables, but it can never be the official memory in Thailand. Because once 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 becomes the exact, official memory of everyone, it will be harder for survivors to mobilise others to politically challenge the official memory.

Given that 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 still has not become an official memory in Thailand, the incident remains open for survivors and former aggressors to make use of it in a way that fits their political ideologies, beliefs, and presuppositions in the present. My focus will be only on survivors and the use of memory in opposition to the government, and I will argue that there is

no such thing possible as a truth of the incident emanating from survivors' testimonies, memories, and narratives. Survivors recall memories in such a way as to make them compatible with political ideologies they support in the present. The obvious example here is Surachart Bamrungsuk, a professor on International Relations at Chulalongkorn University and a survivor of the massacre. In 2016, Bamrungsuk admitted this occasion was the first time he spoke in public about his memories of the massacre, but what was significant was during his testimony about the 6<sup>th</sup> October, he also confessed that "I think we have heard the term 'Brexit' used to describe the process of Britain leaving the EU. I would like to propose that the first necessary condition for democracy in Thailand is 'Mexit'; meaning the first necessary condition is to take the military out of politics."<sup>37</sup>

From his confession, it seems that Bamrungsuk's prime concern is the political situation in Thailand, where the junta has taken political power from the civilian government since May 2014. Therefore, in Bamrungsuk's view, the first and specific condition for democracy in Thailand is the removal of the military from power. While recalling the massacre, he continued with this expression that "it is important the younger generations know what happened. We need to remember because we have come full circle. Once again we have a military government like 40 years ago."<sup>38</sup> In my interpretation, it is possible to indicate two points from this. The first point is that Bamrungsuk's recovery of the massacre underscored a political necessity because his confession shows his concern to the younger generations e.g. Thai student who must know more about this tragic moment in Thai history. At this point, Bamrungsuk's story of the massacre is an attempt to pass the memory from one generation to another. However, the second

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<sup>37</sup> The Big Story, "Buddhist monks lead commemoration of 1976 Thai massacre," accessed November 18, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/c184286988d047c580a917d3589d434b/buddhist-monks-lead-commemoration-1976-thai-massacre>.

<sup>38</sup> The Mail Online, "Thai students mark university massacre amid junta rule," accessed November 18, 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3824572/Thai-students-mark-university-massacre-amid-junta-rule.html>.

point we can take from this, and in conjunction with the psychoanalytic perspective developed in this thesis, the term ‘Mexit’ and the fact that he said ‘once again we have a military government like 40 years ago’ raise suspicions about whether these reflect Bamrungsuk’s conscious or his unconscious.

It could be the case that Bamrungsuk’s retrieval of the massacre is a conscious attempt to use his memory to undermine the political legitimacy of the junta. At a time when younger generations from Thammasat, Kasetsart, and Chulalongkorn universities want to know the truth of the massacre, the question remains that if Bamrungsuk’s testimony of the massacre reflects his intention to use it against the junta, how and in what way is it possible for those students and scholars who admire him to believe that his testimony is a truth? As long as his retrieval of testimony is full of his consciousness and not without his hostility towards the junta, it is likely possible that his testimony will only label the junta and other institutions that supports it as evil, while Bamrungsuk identifies himself and his dead comrades as victims. Does this once again show that his testimony is rooted in a binary opposition between aggressor and victim? Does this once again show that Bamrungsuk performs himself as victim by assuring listeners- e.g. his own students- that he is a victim who is speaking from the truth-position? As a professor of the university, Bamrungsuk is rather a person who is associated more with the students than the military officers. Then, Bamrungsuk is in a position to speak and his testimony is at risk of being accepted immediately by the students as truth. Does this mean that the listeners, in this case the Thai student, are at risk of being given a one-side story at a time when official interaction with the junta with regards to the massacre is precluded?

In terms of the unconscious, it becomes even clearer that Bamrungsuk’s memory of the massacre reflects the survivor’s use of memory in a way that complies with his political ideology

in the present. This means that his testimony goes hand in hand with his political ideology, which can be seen in his use of the term ‘Mexit’ to describe removing the military from Thai politics. To some extent, as I have argued in this thesis, the term Mexit reflects his conscious desire to invent a term to oppose the junta when giving testimony to students and the international media. However, some may argue against this thesis that Bamrungsuk’s testimony is apolitical and not driven by his anti-junta government perspective. Those who make such argument that Bamrungsuk’s testimony is not driven by political objectives are suggested to see Bamrungsuk’s unconscious, which is informing his political viewpoint. That is to say, the term Mexit is supposedly a mirror of his unconscious. The suggestion here is that Mexit is a slip of the tongue, and while Bamrungsuk may have sought to hide his political objectives, he was unable to conceal them. It is impossible for Bamrungsuk to dissociate his memories from his political objectives. Recalling his story of the massacre is susceptible to this, and may be both selective and in compliance with his current anti-military ideology. Juxtaposed with the term Mexit, is his expression that ‘once again we have a military government like 40 years ago’, which suggests the testimony is probably recalled in service of the survivor’s political activism, which means that identifying truth with survivor’s testimony is ideal. Eventually, this is a theory that disappoints Thai students and political activists in their curiosity to know the truth of the incident, because truth is not embodied in the testimony of survivor, and only the identification with the survivor’s political objectives in the present is apparent.

Apart from scholars, we can observe memories of the massacre used by the democratic movement in political conflict in Thailand. In 2006, the yellow-shirt protestors mobilised under the name the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) was putting political pressure on Prime



Minister Samak Sundaravej to resign.<sup>39</sup> As the PAD was promoting democracy under the guidance of monarchy,<sup>40</sup> the PAD was perceived in Thailand as the royalist democratic movement. PAD did not advocate the restoration of absolute monarchy, and so what the PAD was really campaigning for was democracy without the abolition of monarchy.<sup>41</sup> In the PAD's viewpoint, the current governing party, the Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT) comprised politicians who engaged in a corruption.<sup>42</sup> The PAD marched on the streets of Bangkok to protest against Sundaravej's administration. During the protest, one of the prominent PAD leaders, Sondhi Limthongkul, revived memories of the massacre on 6<sup>th</sup> October and used it to discredit members of the TRT. The PAD accused members of the TRT, some of them- such as Chaturon Chaisang, Pinit Jarusombat, and Prommin Letsuridej- survivors of 6<sup>th</sup> October, of plotting to overthrow the constitutional monarchy in the name of communism.<sup>43</sup> The people encamped with the TRT were accused by the PAD of trying to replace the constitutional monarchy with a republic. The PAD's revival of the massacre of the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 in 2006 was due to their desire to create public anxiety about the spectral image of Thai communists in connection with the ongoing influence of former Prime Minister Thaksin, who they believe continues to haunt Thai politics. The issue which is most significant for the thesis is Limthongkul's retrieval of the massacre in such a way as to justify the PAD's political objectives.

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<sup>39</sup> Pavin Chachavalpongpun, "Diagnosing Thailand's democracy crisis, 2001-8," in *Political Change, Democratic Transitions and Security in Southeast Asia*, ed. Mely Caballero-Anthony (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2010). Michael Nelson, "People's Alliance for Democracy: from 'New Politics' to a 'Real' political party?," in *Legitimacy Crisis in Thailand*, ed. Marc Askew (King Prajadhipok's Institute Yearbook (5) (2008/2009).

<sup>40</sup> Aim Sinpeng and Aries Arugay, "'Thailand' the middle class and democracy," in *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Democratization*, ed. William Case (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 110.

<sup>41</sup> Bjorn Dressel, "The Struggle for Political Legitimacy in Thailand," in *Political Legitimacy in Asia: New Leadership Challenges*, ed. John Kane et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 61.

<sup>42</sup> Koompong Noobanjong, "Thailand's path to modern polity," in *Transforming Asian Cities: Intellectual impasse, Asianizing space, and emerging translocalities*, ed. Nihal Perara et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 47. Jon Quah, *Curbing Corruption in Asian Countries: An Impossible Dream?* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 2011), 304-305.

<sup>43</sup> Kanokrat Lertchoosakul, *The Rise of the Octobrists: Power and Conflict among Former Left Wing Student Activists in Contemporary Thai Politics*, PhD thesis submitted to the Department of Government, The London School of Economic and Political Sciences (2012), p. 207

Kanokrat Lertchoosakul shows that the PAD accused survivors of the 6<sup>th</sup> October of being communists who occupy a space in the Thai parliament in order to help former prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, to continue his corrupting influence on Thai politics and to end the Thai monarchy.<sup>44</sup> In so doing, the PAD published an article online containing an interview conversation between Prime Minister Sundaravej and Al Jazeera, in which PM Sundaravej denied allegations of being involved in the murder of students on 6<sup>th</sup> October.<sup>45</sup> Sundaravej told the interviewer that in his memory, there was only one unlucky student who was dragged from the football field and died.<sup>46</sup> However, the argument about whether the PM was involved in a massacre or not is of small concern to this thesis. Rather, what is of greater interest is the way in which memory of the 6<sup>th</sup> October has acted as a catalyst for a political strategy to destroy Thaksin and his cohorts devised by the PAD. The PAD was successful in mobilising a degree of support from the masses because they persuaded them that the alignment between the TRT and survivors of 6<sup>th</sup> October was malicious and sought to harm the Thai monarchy. In effect, most members of the TRT, some of them survivors from 6<sup>th</sup> October, remain silent about the massacre. Lertchoosakul observes this point and suggests that because by becoming a TRT party member one gains access to the centre of power in Thailand and privilege through which one can secure their livelihood, wealth, and prosperity without contaminating their life with traumatic incidents from the past.<sup>47</sup> In common with the argument of Satha-Anand discussed earlier, it seems to them that ignorance of the painful memory, by forgetting the traumatic past, is bliss.

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<sup>44</sup> Lertchoosakul, *The Rise of the Octobrists*, 233, 238, 242.

<sup>45</sup> People's Alliance for Democracy, "Advocate of Massacre," accessed January 23, 2016, [http://www.antithaksin.com/055\\_Samak\\_Massacre.html](http://www.antithaksin.com/055_Samak_Massacre.html).

<sup>46</sup> David Streckfuss, *Truth on Trial in Thailand: Defamation, Treason, and Lese-Majeste* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2011). *101 East – Thailand's new Prime Minister – 09 Feb 08 – Part 2*, in YouTube video, 13:13, posted by Al Jazeera English, February 11, 2008, accessed January 23, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuoqLiLSgnI>.

<sup>47</sup> Lertchoosakul, *The Rise of the Octobrists*, 107, 218.

In contrast to the PAD's principle of democracy under a constitutional monarchy, there are scholars- again survivors of the 6<sup>th</sup> October- who wish to promote democracy in a way that leads to the abolition of the monarchy as the sovereign head of state. Those scholars include Pichit Likitkijsomboon, Thongchai Winichakul, and Somsak Jeamteerasakul.<sup>48</sup> They are survivors who advocate a radical version of democracy that includes overthrowing the monarchy. In their views, their former comrades during October 1976 such as Weng Tojitrakarn and Jaran Ditthaapichai have been unsuccessful in democratising and politically liberating the country.<sup>49</sup> Those scholars even condemned some survivors siding with the PAD who have sought to promote democracy under a constitutional monarchy, as well as those siding with the TRT party aimed at maintaining a representative democracy as traitors to the principle of radical democracy in which the monarchy must be excluded from politics. For those scholars, the political emancipation of Thailand can be affected neither by the politicians of the TRT party, nor the democratic movements of the PAD, nor the PAD's opposition, the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), nor the extra-constitutional action exercised by a *coup d'état*, and certainly not by the King's political intervention. In their views, the true principle of political emancipation is to defeat the *lese majeste* and to overcome the culture of impunity whereby the military can destroy people's lives without penalty. This will be a condition in which Thai people can enjoy political freedom without fear or anxiety. In their views, Thai people must have full civic rights mandated by the constitution which will allow them to discuss the history of the 6<sup>th</sup> October openly without anxiety about the *lese majeste*. At this point, the thesis suggests that these radical survivors' revival of the story of the 6<sup>th</sup> October aim at erode

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<sup>48</sup> Lertchoosakul, *The Rise of the Octobrists*, 254.

<sup>49</sup> Lertchoosakul, *The Rise of the Octobrists*, p. 259.

the Thai monarchy. I will now discuss the work of Thongchai Winichakul before moving on to others.

In 'Remembering/ Silencing the Traumatic Past: The Ambivalent Memories of the October 1976 Massacre in Bangkok', Winichakul suggests that the massacre on the 6<sup>th</sup> October is an historic element that cannot find its proper place in Thailand's normative history. Although he is surrounded by people curious about the truth of the massacre, Winichakul rather suggests that the 6<sup>th</sup> October should be seen as an 'ambivalent memory'.<sup>50</sup> Memory of the massacre is ambivalent, he suggests, because there is also a sense of guilt, which overshadows both the victims<sup>51</sup> and the perpetrators.<sup>52</sup> Although victims and perpetrators have their own particular narratives about the massacre, the sense of guilt discourages the victims and perpetrators alike from recalling the past. In addition, the 6<sup>th</sup> October is an ambivalent memory because the existing political conditions discourage people from telling the stories. Winichakul's article shows that the speaker's will to speak is disrupted by the existing political climate in Thailand, which is governed by the royal elites and the military. Although a commemoration held in 1996 is perceived as a break in the silence, Winichakul maintains that "the traumatic memory of 1976 lies in the realm of unsayable. Its full history is impossible to write under the present system of "Democracy with the Monarch as the Head of the State"". <sup>53</sup>

This leads Winichakul to continue to assault the royal elite, the royalist military, and the monarchy. 6<sup>th</sup> October is an ambivalent memory among the elite as discussing responsibility for the massacre will result in destroying the status quo, that is, their authority to command respect

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<sup>50</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, "Remembering/ Silencing the Traumatic Past: The Ambivalent Memories of the October 1976 Massacre in Bangkok," in *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory*, 246.

<sup>51</sup> Winichakul, 'Remembering/ Silencing the Traumatic Past', 258.

<sup>52</sup> Winichakul, 'Remembering/ Silencing the Traumatic Past', 253.

<sup>53</sup> Winichakul, "Remembering/ Silencing the Traumatic Past," 253.

and control Thai society.<sup>54</sup> Winichakul stresses in another piece that the prevailing institutions that play a key role in engineering respect and controlling power in the Thai society – the military, the elite, the royalists, and the monarchy – are hampering true freedom and prevent discussion of the history of the massacre without anxiety and discouragement. This point is exemplified by his suggestion that “the political ramifications of truth may be unthinkable”<sup>55</sup> because “several individuals and institutions which command power and respect in the society, namely the monarchy and the Buddhist sangha, had been involved in the conspiracy that led to the killing.”<sup>56</sup> At this point, Winichakul’s intention of resurrecting the history of the massacre represents his political objective of dissolving the monarchy by deconstructing the elite’s supremacy. Hardly reflecting the truth of the incident, Winichakul’s scholarly testimony of the 6<sup>th</sup> October consistently fits his anti-royalist ideology.

Winichakul’s ideological and political stance in the present shapes his interpretation and analysis of the past. Following the commemoration of his former comrades in 1996, Winichakul asks “who really were our fallen friends? How should we remember them or how would we want them to be remembered by the public? To be precise, were they communists, Marxists, radicals, rabble-rousers...who were unfortunately misunderstood as radicals? And no matter who they were, did we want them remembered as such?”<sup>57</sup> In my interpretation, these questions in turn show Winichakul’s use of his memory as a rationalisation of his staunch anti-royalism. In other words, those questions reflect Winichakul’s political strategy in exploiting his memory of the past in order to overthrow the monarchy. Although Winichakul is admired by activists in

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<sup>54</sup> Winichakul, “Remembering/ Silencing the Traumatic Past,” 252.

<sup>55</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, “We do not forget the 6 October” The 1996 Commemoration of the October 1976 Massacre in Bangkok’, Paper Presentation at the workshop on ‘Imagining the Past, Remembering the Future’, Cebu, the Philippines, 8-10 March (2001), p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Winichakul, “We do not forget the 6 October”, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Winichakul, “We do not forget the 6 October”, 8.

Thailand as an intellectually radical activist and as a highly respected democratic survivor, doubt is raised about the truth of his testimony and interpretation of the 6<sup>th</sup> October. Therefore, because Winichakul's reinterpretation and resurrection of the incident is linked to his current political ideology, his movement is now not different from his opponent, the PAD leader, Limtongkul. While Limtongkul's political tactic of using the 6<sup>th</sup> October in order to mobilise mass support against Thaksin and other members of the TRT, Winichakul's tactic uses memory to resist the elite and the monarchy. Precisely, this means not only that memory towards the incident is bifurcated, but it also demonstrates that Winichakul's and Limtongkul's political tactic of exploiting the memory of the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 to sustain their political ideologies are similar: Winichakul and Limtongkul are two sides of the same coin, insofar as they simply rely on similar political tactics of exploiting memories of the past to sustain an ideology rooted in their beliefs in the present.

Accordingly, I suggest that survivors' understandings and interpretations of the past are subject to political ideologies that survivors want to promote in the present. Apart from Winichakul, the perspective of Giles Ungpakorn, a son of Puey Ungpakorn, a rector of the Thammasat University who was directly involved in a massacre incident, is striking. Ungpakorn Giles declares himself as a Thai Marxist, who participated in many political activities before fleeing to London after being charged with violating the *lese majeste* in his unpublished book, *A Coup for the Rich*. Although he was not in Thailand in 1976, he absorbed his father's painful memories of the incident, which means that memory of the 6<sup>th</sup> October is for him an epiphenomenon. Ungpakorn's understanding of the massacre resembles Winichakul's and Limthongkul's in the sense that his interpretation of the massacre is subject to his political ideology. This point is clearly evident in the paper he presented at the School of Oriental and

African Studies in 2001 in which Ungpakorn stressed that “The 6th October 1976 massacre was a successful attempt to destroy the Left in Thai politics. The ruling elite, who were behind this massacre, have no long term objection to parliamentary democracy on one condition: that it is cleansed of all ideas of socialism.”<sup>58</sup> In retrospect, Ungpakorn’s understanding of the massacre as the elite’s destruction of the left reflects his Marxist stance. Ungpakorn’s insistence on his personal account of the 6<sup>th</sup> October meets with our theory that individuals have a tendency to exploit the past by using it instrumentally to continue and legitimise their political ideology in the present.

The use of the past to rationalise political movements in the present can be seen in the personal outlook of Somsak Jeamteerasakul, a survivor of the 6<sup>th</sup> October, and someone who is known as a prominent anti-monarchy figure. In his personal blog, Jeamteerasakul’s focus on the relationship between the royal music called ‘We Fight’ and the Thai state’s military ideology in suppressing communism in 1976 reflects his consistent anti-monarchy stance and his personalisation of the memory of the past.<sup>59</sup> In Jeamteerasakul’s view, a military crackdown on protestors on the 6<sup>th</sup> October is not only a traumatic event, but it is also legitimised and inspired by the royal music of ‘We Fight’.<sup>60</sup> Its lyrics urge the people of the land to destroy enemies, a term that is used to signify Thai communists, leftists, and anti-monarchists. By describing the uprising at Thammasat University as one of ‘enemies’- as described in the lyrics of ‘We Fight’- perpetrators are insulated from charges of civic rights violations against the people.<sup>61</sup> Denouncing protestors as traitors to the nation and the Thai monarchy, protestors’ civic rights are

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<sup>58</sup> Giles Ungpakorn, “Cleansing democracy of socialism,” Paper Presentation at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, September 2001, 15, accessed January 23, 2016, file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Oct\_76\_Thai.pdf.

<sup>59</sup> Somsak Jeamteerasakul, “‘We Fight’ after the 6 October,” accessed January 23, 2016, <http://somsakwork.blogspot.co.uk/2006/10/6.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Jeamteerasakul, “‘We Fight’ after the 6 October.”

<sup>61</sup> Jeamteerasakul, “‘We Fight’ after the 6 October.”

relinquished and they are presented as ‘enemies’ who can simply be killed. Jeamteerasakul’s suggests that the incident at Thammasat University was inspired by the lyrics of the ‘We Fight’ and served as a fulfilment of the desire of the monarchy to eliminate the communists.<sup>62</sup> Admittedly, Jeamteerasakul’s revisionism *vis a vis* the historiography of 6<sup>th</sup> October is intriguing for Thai intellectual life since it offers provocative thoughts about the royal family’s involvement in the bloodshed. Nonetheless, it must be noted that perhaps Jeamteerasakul’s intellectual strategy of utilising his personal memory of the past converges with his anti-royalist political ideology. In other words, his suggestion of the remarkable link between the royalist ideology embodied in ‘We Fight’ and the military’s operation against protestors, is the only way of representing the 6<sup>th</sup> October that is compatible with his own political beliefs. He simply adjusts his memory of the past to meet with his political ideology. Memory is used instrumentally according to his political ideology with the aim of undermining the legitimacy of the monarchy; the same strategy that royalists like Limthongkul have exercised to undermine anti-royalists and TRT party members.

In conclusion, this section contrasts with the viewpoints of Thai liberal historians that inspire Thai scholars and students to adopt western knowledge and westernised ways of thinking about the country as liberal and modern- e.g. to hold responsible persons accountable- in that its discussion of the politics of survivors demonstrates how survivors associated with government and those engaged in political activism have been caught in a conflict of memory. By arguing against the belief that 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 is an unsayable history, it can be suggested that the massacre is already a sayable history; albeit unofficially so. By seeking to blur the boundary between silence and voice and between sayable and unsayable history, ‘the unofficial sayable’,

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<sup>62</sup> Jeamteerasakul, “‘We Fight’ after the 6 October.”



defined as the known history outside the acceptance of government, visualises the tension of memory and the uncompromising stance between the Ideological-Trauma and the Real-Trauma; an aspect of the politics of memory that we will discuss further in the next chapter, when the thesis seeks to critically reflect upon all four case studies. In partial agreement with Satha-Anand's ideas about collective amnesia, it is true that the government wants Thai people to completely forget the history of the massacre. At the same time, however, as Winichakul argues, some- but certainly not all- right-wing members talk about the killings in order to argue that they were justified because the protestors were communists. In the same way as other case studies suggested, this is the Ideological-Trauma, a national trauma with a political narrative given to it by the government. But in complete opposition to Satha-Anand's ideas about collective amnesia, the government faces a challenge from survivors who have revived the history of the massacre to promote 6<sup>th</sup> October as an official memory and to seek those responsible for the massacre, which makes reference to the close relationship between the military and the monarchy. This history of the massacre recalled by survivors in opposition to the government is the Real-Trauma, which is a narrative, story, and memory given by survivors external to the inscription and description of the Ideological-Trauma but given with the aim of disintegrating the Ideological-Trauma.

In the case of Thailand, the narratives, stories, and memories used by survivors highlight a category of trauma that seeks to undermine the elite's reputation by accusing the network of monarchy and military as being behind the massacre. It must be noted, however, that the Real-Trauma is problematic because it does not guarantee that the truth of the incident is given by survivors. Instead of elucidating the truth of the incident, the Real-Trauma reflects the use of memories, testimonies, and stories that survivors make for their political objectives in the

present. The Real-Trauma, although ‘Real’ in a Lacanian sense that it is not symbolised in the social order, rather reflects the political strategy and tactic of depending on memories, still external to the official memory, to destroy the enemy. This repetitive strategy is discovered on many occasions, such as in the interview and testimony given by Bamrungsuk’s ‘Mexit’, in Limthongkul’s revival of memory to destroy the TRT, in Winichakul’s articles and talks, Ungpakorn’s paper conference, and Jeamteerasakul’s blog. These people are doing the same thing: they see memories of the massacre as a resource to influence and mobilise listeners such as students and a younger generation of scholars in order to justify their own political positions in the present. Ultimately, it is worth recalling that during May 1969 in France, Lacan harshly told the student protestors against De Gaulle in Paris that ‘you are hysterics who demand a new master, go for it, and you will get one’. Following Lacan, this will be my response to Thai scholars and students who blindly believe the stories, narratives, and memories of those survivors, that ‘you are hysterics who wish to know the truth which does not exist, go for it, listen to them, accept what they said, and you will get none’.

### **‘The Three Towers of the Reals’**

Following the discussion points in the previous section, this section proposes the idea of ‘The Three Towers of the Reals’, which suggests that the character of the Real is a multiplicity; the Real is not monolithic. It is useful to begin with the viewpoint of survivors who have political authority and whose imposition of violence on Thai communists is crucial because, in their view, the Thai communists were trying to overthrow monarchy. From the perspective of the pro-government survivors, it can be said that protestors at Thammasat University were the Real; the

unknown communists who had sought to overthrow the King. As a result, the situation was traumatic because such viewpoint becomes a rationality for killing Thai communists, leftists, and radicals without sympathy from others. It is suggested that the situation was made more traumatic by the fact that other Thais sided with the police, the para-state forces, and the military and were able to view the massacre without sympathy. This is where *the first tower of the Real* is formulated, that is, *being a witness to violence does not necessarily generate trauma as long as the fallen are not worth respecting or commemorating*. The reason for this can be found in the logic of sovereignty and the claim made by Giorgio Agamben, when he suggests that “the fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life, *homo sacer*, as the original political element and as the threshold of articulation between nature and culture, *zoē* and *bios*.”<sup>63</sup> The state of exception in Agamben’s thesis refers to the role of the sovereign decision in creating, continuing, suspending, in-lawing and out-lawing the rule of law. While *zoē* indicates the universal meaning of “the living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods)”<sup>64</sup>, *bios* points out that life is drawn into political space under the mandate of the polis and such life as a politicised being is qualified and guaranteed as the ordinarily political life of modern men by the state such as a possession of full citizenship.<sup>65</sup> In the third space, bare life is a material condition of a particular form-of-life which is neither *zoē* nor *bios*, it is life inherent in the domain of sovereign power but such life can be killed without being counted as being destroyed and concisely bare life is noted as “life which may be killed and yet not sacrificed”.<sup>66</sup>

As Jenny Edkins has pointed out, the core of Agamben’s argument lies in the way in which it seeks to problematize “how the sovereign power operates through the state of

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<sup>63</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 181.

<sup>64</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 4.

emergency”<sup>67</sup> and in another work jointly authored with Véronique-Pin Fat, Edkins suggests to view bare life as a powerless life, a life that by definition is deprived of a status of political life but complexly still inherent in the domain of sovereign power.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the Thai state’s transformation of the situation into a state of emergency is evident because there are some Thais who sided with the violence, and who were able to carry on watching violence carried out against those bare lives without being affected by trauma. Instead of being disturbed by violence and atrocity, experiencing violence by seeing life that can be generates enjoyment. In short, the first tower of the Real which is enmeshed with the perspective of pro-government survivors is followed by an event in which becoming witness to violence generates for the witnesses a surplus enjoyment, presumably because Thai communists, the left, and anti-monarchy radicals were ‘bare lives’ left vulnerable to attack without receiving sympathy from others.

In dispute with the first tower of the Real, are surviving political activists, whose testimonies, narratives, and memories are opposed to the testimonies, narratives, and memories of the survivors who have adopted the position of the government. Scholars such as Bamrungsuk, Winichakul, Ungpakorn, and Jeamteerasakul see their memories as resources to justify their anti-royalist ideology in the present. They intend not only to give voice to the silence of the massacre, but also to deconstruct the central pillar of Thailand’s symbolic order. In this circumstance, the Real is meant to cause the collapse of the central institution of Thai identity: the Thai monarchy. It is from this standpoint that the second tower of the Real is formulated. Thus, *the second tower of the Real* is that *the return of the Real signals a collapse of Thai symbolic order*. Survivors in their passion to transform the current political regime in

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<sup>67</sup> Jenny Edkins, “Sovereign Power, Zone of Indistinction, and the Camp,” *Alternatives*, 25 (1) (2000), 20.

<sup>68</sup> Jenny Edkins, Véronique Pin-Fat, and Michael Shapiro, *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7.

Thailand play a key role in bringing the Real back to the symbolic order and deliberately deconstruct the symbolic order. Therefore, the aim is not to give a voice to or to awake memory of the massacre because a radical stance is taken in order to overthrow the central pillar of Thai symbolic order. In short, the second tower of the Real is entwined with the perspective of survivors and political activists, or what this thesis has described as pro-democracy survivors, whose political intention is not only to awake memory of the 6<sup>th</sup> October, but also to use it to deconstruct the Thai symbolic order.

In retrospect, *the first tower and the second towers of the Real* are inevitable consequences of the symbolisation of the Real performed by survivors of the massacre, and leads to conflicts of memory. Critically, *the first tower and the second towers of the Real* are the consequence of pro-government survivors and the pro-democracy survivors relating their memories of the massacre to others. This means that *the first and the second towers of the Real* are tied by the same strategy of trying to symbolise the Real and trying to give particular meaning to it; in other words, they are two sides of the same coin. It is from these problematics that *the third tower of the Real* is forged theoretically as *an enigmatic Real that resists symbolisation of it*. It suggests that the massacre of the 6<sup>th</sup> October is something unbeknown in full to survivors, perpetrators, and victims. The massacre becomes known to others including the generation after the incident because there is an attempt by survivors to symbolise it. This can be put another way with the use of a gender analogy. If the symbolisation of the Real is analysed as a male political tactic to exploit memory of the massacre to continue political ideologies which the survivors have chosen to support in the present, *the third tower of the Real* emerges to challenge the two towers by maintaining itself metaphorically as the feminine as the enigmatic image. It is *the third tower of the Real* characterised as *what a woman does want is completely*

*enigmatic* in that it informs us that *the first and second towers of the Real* are, in this sense, pathogenic. In short, *the third tower of the Real* is the symptom of *the first and second towers of the Real*, which corresponds with one of Lacan's famous sayings, which disempowers male domination, and which stresses that "woman is a symptom of man".<sup>69</sup>

### **Reflecting the Case Study**

This section aims to explore the case study of the Thai massacre from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective by dividing it into three main points. The first point highlights that survivors' actions of recalling memories to listeners means speaking from the position of the big Other which in consequence forming the object of desire for listeners, which is the desire to know the truth of the incident. As the object of desire stands as a substitution for the impossibility of access to the truth of the incident, the second part adds that the object of desire is symptomatic because it only reflects memory used in the interest of political activism. Such an object of desire that replaces and stands in as a substitution to the truth of the incident not only appears as an illusion, in the sense that it eventually betrays the listeners, but it also reflects survivors' *jouissances* in recalling that memory is pleasure when used as part of political activism but painful at the same time because it sets in motion a memory of the past. Following on from these two points, the third point highlights the impossibility of language to illuminate the Real in full; despite survivors' attempts to symbolise a traumatic incident. Bringing the traumatic incident to the attention of others faces difficulties and limitations that arise out of language.

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<sup>69</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "Rossellini: Woman as Symptom of Man," *October* 102 (54) (1990): 18-44.

First, in a similar fashion to the other three case studies, it can be said that Thai survivors' attempts to draw people's attention to the 6<sup>th</sup> October massacre reflects not the truth of the incident incorporated in the narrative, but rather memory is re-enacted in order to justify their political movements. This theory has implications if one looks into Bamrungsuk's interview including the works of Winichakul's, Ungpakorn's, and Jeamteerasakul's which are lucid in pointing out that the return of the Real to the symbolic order is palpable as a symbolisation of the Real, a process of trying to revive the immaterial past which cannot be made into something intelligible. To some extent, while survivors are in an advantageous position to undertake this symbolisation of the Real, this should not blind one to the fact that the symbolisation of the Real is indispensable part of the survivor's political strategy. These viewpoints suggest a Lacanian assumption by which survivors of the 6<sup>th</sup> October can be branded as the big Other. The big Other informs a problematic in terms of the relationship between the subject and the formation of desire, which is formed in the relationship between the subject and the Other.<sup>70</sup> As discussed in chapter 1, the reason why Lacan maintains that "unconscious is the desire of the Other"<sup>71</sup> is because the subject has not realised that desire is formulated by encounters with the big Other. Therefore, the narratives, testimonies, and stories told by Thai survivors are perhaps the big Other to the listeners, who are interested in their stories, and which in turn form an object of desire to those people. It is this relationship between the survivor's narrative and the formation of desire produced by survivors' narratives, testimonies, and stories by which those Thai survivors' are characterised as the Lacanian big Other. It is regrettable for those Thais and their desires to understand the massacre, that by placing their desires on survivor's narratives, testimonies, and stories; all of which are underscored as the big Other. This is not incompatible

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<sup>70</sup> James Mellard, *Beyond Lacan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 227.

<sup>71</sup> Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg, *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 102.

with Lacan's suggestion that the formation of desire is compatible with the presence of the big Other in which the subjects, in this case, the Thai listeners are unable to realise that their unconscious as well as their desires are formed through their relationship with the big Other, in this case, Thai survivors of the 6<sup>th</sup> October. Nonetheless, the history of the massacre related to them by survivors is dangerous because listeners are at risk of overlooking the survivors' political tactics of using the memory of the past to further their current beliefs.

Second, it is from the argument that survivors' narratives of the past are not inconsistent with the continuation of their political ideologies in the present that we can identify that the survivors' narrative of the past is a symptom. The earlier section suggests that survivors' narratives of the past relate to the use of memory for the sake of political resistance. Despite survivors' narratives being considered as the object of desire; there is a symptom constituted in the object of desire. A Lacanian analysis suggests that it is symptom contained in the survivor's narrative that indicates that the survivor's narrative is the object of desire that contains flaws and incompleteness. As long as listeners trust survivors' narratives, stories, and testimonies, it can be said that they are partially influenced by the pathological object of desire. As long as listeners are unaware of the pathological character of the object of desire, they unconsciously continue to have a faith in survivors' narratives, stories, and testimonies, which are arguably (in)complete objects of desire. The pathological object of desire produces a whole spectrum of desire but what the subjects find desirable is what Lacan calls *the object petit a*, an object cause of desire constituted with a symptom, an incompleteness, and a lack.<sup>72</sup> In this respect, we can say that narratives, stories, and testimonies of the 6<sup>th</sup> October survivors are bound up with Lacan's *object petit a*. With the absence of the truth of the massacre, survivors' narratives, stories, and

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<sup>72</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 87.



testimonies act as the objects of desire that replace such absence, but the replacement of the truth explains why those are dangerous for listeners.

It is compatible with survivors' narratives, stories, and testimonies characterised as *the object petit a*, in which the survivor's subjectivity is conflated with a symptom as well as *jouissance*. Even if survivors' narratives, stories, and testimonies are interpreted as the Lacanian big Other, the subjectivities of survivors formed in relation to those are symptomatic as a result of the lack within their narratives, stories, and testimonies. At this point, the chapter suggests that *some survivors are symptomatic to us*; not in a sense that the action in recalling the past makes the truth oblivious to survivors and listeners; but rather that the memory of the past as the Real metamorphoses as a political instrument for survivors in the present. Thus, some of the 6<sup>th</sup> October survivors are symptomatic because testimonies communicated to listeners are imbued with political tactics to justify political ideology they have upheld for so long; from the past to the present and probably in the future.

Although past memory is painful, reviving it for a political purpose is congenial. We can say that recalling painful memory is not painful activity *per se* as it is suggested that resurrecting the past like this does not trigger survivor's trauma. In the case of Thailand, because the past has been used for political resistance, recalling it seems to generate *jouissance* or surplus enjoyment for some survivors rather than depression or agony. The relationship between survivors' recovery of the past and *jouissance* when it is performed as political resistance means that we can identify some survivors as symptomatic. This relationship between the way that survivors recall the past and their political ideology in the present not only demonstrates that survivors are symptomatic, but it also highlights survivors' subjectivities. How do survivors choose to

remember the past and is connecting memory with the present optional? In what way, by what means, and with which political purpose are all representations of their subjectivities.

Third, in relation to the 6<sup>th</sup> October massacre, the return of the Real or a resurrection of the history of the massacre to generates discrepancies between different groups of survivors. In the case of Thailand, this theoretical paradigm urges us to examine differing and conflicting aspects of memory by arguing that major conflict lies in the uncompromising relation between the elite's memory (or the memory of 'the pro-government survivor') and the memory of the democratic survivor (or the memory of 'the pro-democracy survivor'). The memory of 'the pro-government survivor' suggests that some 'perpetrators' should not be seen as guilty of killing protestors and, in fact, they should even be proud of killing Thai communists in order to secure the country and monarchy. Although the killing of students is excused by the elite because it is supposed to have safeguarded nation and monarchy, the massacre is even more traumatic given that Thai people could stand by watching other Thais being killed and be joyous about it. This leads to what the chapter calls the first tower of the Real, which elucidates a group of witnesses encountering violence yet remaining unaffected by trauma.

In contrast to the memory of 'the pro-government survivor', the memory of 'the pro-democracy survivor' elucidates a political activist's motivation to encourage critical discussion of the massacre without being charged by the Thai *lese majeste*. An open discussion of the massacre is equated with a recuperation of the repressed and silent memory as an alternative to the elite's memory. It is a radical version of memory that suggests that national reconciliation among Thais is impossible, that Buddhism was a permissive cause of the killing of communists, and that survivors have claimed that the King and other royal family members endorsed killing the protestors. In effect, this argument is in conjunction with the second tower of the Real, which

highlights that the return of the Real has led to the destabilisation of the symbolic order. A radical and democratised version of memory declared by the pro-democracy survivor is bound up with the intention to overthrow the alliance of monarchy and military that comprises the Thai establishment, which means that survivor's objective is not simply to promote democracy for the country, but to violently deconstruct Thai symbolic order.

However, as long as the Lacanian Real is the impossibility that cannot be easily 'dashed' or 'written' into the symbolic order, this suggests that any attempt to symbolise the Real is an incomplete process. As long as the 'writing' or the symbolisation of the Real is bounded up with a political tactic to promote democracy, it is dubious whether the return of the Real can be conceived as the truth as such. Adjacent to this point is the tension of language and the testimony of trauma given by survivors. Although survivors' attempts to recover and re-narrate their stories of the massacre give voice to the silent history, it is impossible for the narrative to cover all aspects of the incident. This limitation of language highlights the way in which narrative struggles to represent and communicate the truth to listeners. This limitation is shared by survivors in the position of the government and those who oppose it; both types of survivors need to overcome the limitation of language in order to communicate the truth of the incident to others. The leftover or the omission of certain aspects, which informs the problematic of the survivor's narrative, is the result of survivors' inability to represent all stories of the massacre with language. This reflects not only the selective use of memory by survivors who exclude memories not relevant to their political movement in the present, but also the way that the narratives, stories, and memories of the massacre given by survivors are structured by lacks. These lacks suggest listeners are susceptible to the Real, something which it is never possible for

those narratives, stories, and memories to elucidate, and directs listeners to assume a feminine logic of the not all in approaching the representation of massacres given by survivors.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter looks into the politics of survivors in the case of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 massacre in Thailand. In common with Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar, it can be suggested that Thai survivors continue to participate in the political life of the country in the present.<sup>73</sup> The chapter starts by exploring viewpoints of the liberal Thai historians by identifying that those historians aim to identify aggressors, problematize culture of impunity in Thailand, and to execute those persons responsible for the killings. Following this, the chapter focuses on the academic works of survivors in order to highlight survivors' reliance on memory as a significant political resource through which to mobilise others to overthrow the current regime. The third section of the chapter proposes the idea of 'the three towers of the Reals', which postulates that the Real is a multiplicity. The first tower of the Real reflects the destruction of bare life, notably, a Thammasat student who was dragged from the university and hung from a tree, while others can watch his death without sympathy. The second tower of the Real is of the perspective of survivors in the governmental position, and argues that the student are communists, in other words, they are the Real that must be killed. The third tower of the Real assumes the gap between the first and second towers by hypothesising that there is the Real that still enigmatic to us and is inherent in the traumatic incident; the Real in this sense is a not-all.

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<sup>73</sup> Giles Ji Ungpakorn, "The impact of the Thai 'Sixties' on the Peoples Movement today," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 7 (4) (2006): 570-588.

The case study of Thailand is similar to the other case studies insofar as they share the idea of language, conscious, unconscious, the testimony as the object of desire, and a recalling of memory for a political purpose as a *jouissance*. However, each case study demonstrates a distinct and unique character. Understanding these distinctions is significant for the gradual development of a theory of the politics of survivors. To reiterate the differences between them, the Vietnam case shows the artworks of survivors who support themselves by working as artists in the US. The Cambodian case shows the prosecution of the former aggressors while survivors such as Chum Mey and Vann Nath are invited to give a testimony in a court. The Myanmar case study explores the role of the body as a site of trauma and the idea of post-memory that has some implications but yet has a number of limitations within the case study. The Thai case is unique because it proposes the concept of the three towers of the Real (and it must be noted here that any concept can operate differently in each case study). Each case study has the potential for researchers to seek to develop concept and ideas of their own after the case study has been carefully examined.

Moreover, in this thesis, case studies speak to each other and encourage us to revisit each case study in the context of the others. The Vietnam case study suggests that researchers should explore survivors' artworks in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand which contain or visualise the images of the incidents. The Cambodia case suggests that we should ask whether and why the prosecution of aggressors is possible in Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand. Why, for example, has prosecution been successful in Cambodia, while prosecutions and trials are not available in the other countries? The Myanmar case asks of the other cases why and in what ways have survivors been successful in forming a government to rule the country? Have those Burmese survivors from the former anti-government movement really been successful in ruling the

country democratically, respecting all races and the rights of minorities, without resorting to violence? Finally, the case of Thailand suggests that those interested in the Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar cases might examine the academic works of scholars that contain trauma, memory, and political activism. Are there similarities or differences between Thai academic work that talk about the massacre and those produced by scholars in other countries? With these inquiries, this thesis offers some answers to those questions, but it also important that the task of revisiting each case study is taken up in further research.

For future research of the Thai case study, it is possible for other Lacanians to conduct research by applying and modifying other psychoanalytical concepts such as ‘Name-of-the-Father’, ‘Oedipus complex’, and ‘anti-Oedipus’, although researchers will find research on those issues constrained by legal permission. Theoretical researchers who are interested in the political history of Thailand may be able to apply the work of critical theorists such as Foucault, Deleuze, and Badiou in order to expand the existing political and philosophical concepts offered by those thinkers. It will be exciting to see how researchers can apply and at the same time modify Foucault’s ‘biopolitics’, Deleuze’s ‘becoming’, and Badiou’s ‘evental site’. It is worth noting that to open a theoretical discussion in order to modify existing theory will be to utilise the case study of Thailand as a means to fulfil the end of producing a new and modifiable theory; theory is defined by its plasticity; and new theoretical interpretations arguably reflect researchers’ subjectivity.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Articulating the Theory in Four Scenarios: Survivors, Memory, Trauma, and Subjectivity**

#### **Introduction**

The objective of this chapter is to show that the case studies of violence, memories, traumas, and survivors in four Southeast Asian countries demonstrate the validity of the thesis's central theoretical proposal. To reiterate, the theory of the politics of the survivor developed in chapter one draws four disciplines together, which are Žižek's 'critique of ideology', memory theory, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and trauma theory in order to understand issues of politics, memory, trauma, and the subjectivity of survivors. The research questions developed in chapter one sought to test the validity of this theoretical proposal. As such, the thesis has proceeded with two main research questions. The first asks that given the encounters with violence the remaining memory of trauma, what are the roles of survivors in political movements in the present? Following on from this, the second research question asks how the encounters with trauma shape survivors' subjectivities? These research questions establish issues of politics, survivors, memory, trauma, and subjectivity as keys to testing the central theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework established in the first chapter employed the term 'ultrapolitics', the term having been coined by Slavoj Žižek to describe the impossibility of making everything free from conflict under the aegis of the modern state. As ultrapolitics is a politics where 'there is no common ground for symbolic conflict', the politics of survivors

manifests itself as a political scenario capable of breaking this veil of utopianism and revealing a site of antagonism. However, Žižek's idea of communism is the idea which any political agents who wish to transform the current political state can adopt, and he neglects to include traumatised people in his political imagination, and as such this thesis develops Žižek's ultrapolitics by adopting Laclau's disidentification and exploring the activities of survivors who play a crucial role in resisting the political oppression. By exploring the way that survivors of past trauma play a large role in political activism in the present, the aim is to enlarge Žižek's account of ultrapolitics, from his fixation on the idea of communism to open another space in which survivors can take part in political movement.

Second, through using memory theory, the thesis utilises the concept of 'collective memory' coined by Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora's 'the site of memory' in order to stress that survivors' memories of trauma can be recognised as a collective memory as well as a site of memory. Third, through using trauma theory, it draws upon Cathy Caruth's emphasis on the impossibility of communicating trauma through language to address the tensions between narrative, truth, and trauma. Fourth, using psychoanalytic theory, the thesis has drawn on Lacanian concepts of consciousness, unconscious, the symbolic order, the Real, *the object petit a*, the *jouissance*, symptom, sinthome, and the death drive in order to take into account the subjectivities of survivors. Theoretically, this shows that Lacanian psychoanalysis not only sheds light on the formation of survivors' subjectivity through their encounters with violence and trauma, but also becomes a theoretical tool to highlight problems with regards, for instance, the survivor's appearance in the symbolic order, the impossibility to communicate trauma in full, and the surplus enjoyment (*jouissance*) found in recounting trauma to others.



As such, it is appropriate to provide overall analyses of the four case studies in three main sections. The first section focuses on survivors and the politics of memory. The aim of this section is to argue that the politics of survivors in relation to memory must be examined in the context of the use of memory enacted by survivors that leads to the disintegration of social harmony. Although this section focuses on survivors and the politics of memory, it combines political theory and psychoanalysis to engage in a critical dialogue. To grasp the essential points, when memory is understood in the context of power relations, memory is something that is socially propagated nationwide with the exercise of power of the state regulation. On the contrary, resistance to the official memory by survivors culminates in the impossibility of social closure including the breakdown of social harmony; rendering closure an impossible utopianism.

The second section serves to extend the arguments made in the first section. Aligning arguments with a key literature derived from memory theory, this section analyses survivors and their memory of trauma. On the assumption that traumas influence survivors' experiences of violent incidents, the works of art are cultural artefacts that represent depression and painful memories entrenched in survivors' mentalities. This section draws on key literatures on memory theory in order to discuss the representation of trauma in the work of art. It shows that survivors' experience of trauma is 'the collective memory' and essentially 'the site of memory'. These have led to the deconstruction of the existing social memory regulated by the state in favour of a reconstruction of social memory. This signals a recognition that the debates in the first and second sections overlap with each other.

The third section argues that survivors' subjectivities can be articulated via Lacan's theory of subjectivity. In other words, the section highlights that survivors of the four case studies are Lacanian subjects. Trauma has had an influence over survivors' consciousness and

trauma is something that survivors experience corporeally. However, trauma is a mental disturbance that survivors have difficulty communicating to others. Communicating trauma from consciousness may mislead survivors that their acts of speaking and representing traumas have been communicated vividly to others. Meanwhile the notion of the unconscious alerts us that perhaps there exist effects of trauma that are still active in survivors' mentalities but which survivors fail to realise and thus fail to communicate alongside active parts of trauma. In addition, this section continues that survivors are understood as the object cause of desire (*the object petit a*), which means that survivors are only a desirable object for their supporters/audiences only insofar as survivors maintain their political movements against the state. A failure to respond to the demand of the desire of the Other, in this case the desire of supporters/audiences, may result in a withdrawal of support to survivors and subsequently survivors stop being viewed as the object cause of desire. This is also predicated on the interrelationship among a death drive, a *sinthome*, and a *jouissance*. To explain further, this shows that a recollection of memory generates in survivors so-called 'a surplus enjoyment', in this case, the enjoyment which transcends the expectation of social norms. Thus, the political movements of survivors are filled with *jouissance* when recounting traumas. Under the conditions that survivors may have to face violence exercised by the state, their continuation of political movements against the current government reflect their death drives; a will to embrace death. At this point, survivors are Lacanian *sinthome(s)* in two senses; death drive shows survivors' wills to distance themselves from the desire of the Other to become another mode of existence that opposes the state and the will to accept death rather reflect survivors' *jouissance*. Here, the thesis affirms that Lacanian psychoanalysis is relevant to our understanding of survivors, traumas, memories, subjectivities, and a series of political activism.

## **Survivors and the Politics of Memory**

### *The Use of Memory*

The use of memory is fundamental to political movements that retrieve the past in order to further ideology and belief in the present. The use of memory in politics assumes that the present is not innocent of the past. Rather, the past serves the political requirements of the present. As the use of memory erases temporal distance, this implies that a convergence of the two temporal structures designates a phenomenal incident. The use of memory produces meaning and in effect produces multiple realities based on the determinate imaginaries that survivors have had in mind. This leads me to suggest that the past must meet the requirements of the present. It is through this suggestion in which the use of memory produces the following twofold meanings.

The first meaning of this is that the convergence of the past and present through the use of memory indicates the continuity of the worldly imaginary of the subjects. That is to say, subjects carry an image of the past- including the worldview obtained from the past- and apply it to understand the reality of the present. In other words, it is an application of the worldview obtained from the past as the basis for the understanding the present that allows us to envisage the convergence of the realities of the present and the past. As a consequence, any perceptions and understanding of the present stems from the image and influence of the past. Following the assumption that the past underpins the way that subjects perceive and understand the present, subjects may be indulging in a belief that the realities of the present and those of the past are not opposed to one other but are rather intertwined with each other. The present that is modelled on

the past tends to sustain that, regardless of the difference in terms of temporal structures; the subjects may wish to pursue the coordinated image of the past and the present in the future.

The second meaning of my suggestion that the past must meet the requirements of the present is to put the issue more critically in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis, that the truth of the past is the big Other<sup>1</sup>. As the past is situated beyond the capability of the linguistic articulation and instantly beyond the possibility of the gaze to capture it, the past is naturalised as the non-articulate and non-discursive Other. That is to say, the politics of memory is about tangibly engaging in articulating the past by negating the assumption that the past cannot be recovered. However, the truth about the past remains the big Other. Why does the past remain as the big Other? The reason is because survivors' recoveries of the past are not the truth of the past and not the master-signifier of the past.<sup>2</sup> In effect, the past that is recalled by survivors is for the sake of political goals in the present, which can be practised in at least two scenarios. In the first scenario, elucidating the past by connecting it to the state order culminates in the continuation of the governmental imposition of knowledge and the official memory. This process of interconnecting the past, the present, and the state order through the subjects' articulation of the past has led to the emergence of what the thesis proposes earlier in chapter 1 as 'the Ideological-trauma'; a configuration of trauma prescribed by the state understood as a totality of the knowledge of the trauma. Precisely, the Ideological-trauma becomes recognisable only insofar as the articulation of the past is controlled by officials, a recount of the specific form of memory in agreement with the state order, with pleasure and gratification found in conjunction with the official memory. This matter can be explained in a psychoanalytic register,

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<sup>1</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), 2.

<sup>2</sup> I borrow this idea from Lacan's instruction that "no one-to-one correspondence between the two systems [of signifier and of the signified] can be established" in Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book III: The Psychosis, 1955-1956*, trans. Russel Grigg (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: 1993), 119.

and as argued in the previous chapters, indulging in the state's imposition of memory is seen at the same time as sustaining a fantasy for subjects whose worldviews are shaped by the state's fantasy.

It is in light of this consideration that the second scenario makes an entry. In the second scenario, recounting the past by making it relevant to the discontinuity, effacing the effect of the state's imposition of the ideological trauma, rebellious attitudes and action against the ideological trauma are renditions of the negation of the evasive character of the ideological trauma, producing what in this thesis I have called 'the Real-trauma'. It is through the lens of the Real-trauma, a radical image of trauma that transgresses the discursivity of trauma enforced by the ideological trauma, where the practical politics of survivors in relation to memory and trauma can incorporate the memory and trauma of survivors not bound to the government. In respect to survivors with a political view in opposition to the government, the aim of the survivors in using of personal and occasionally collective memories are to create the emancipatory account of memory and trauma, to liberate memory from the constraints of the governmental viewpoint, to cause a regression to the current regime, and to ground the collective demand for a political and structural transformation of the current regime.

The four scenarios of the politics of survivors in Southeast Asia reflects the thesis's theorisation of the use of memory. With the presupposition that the irreparable effect of the past plays an eminent role in shaping subjects' view of the present, it is likely that survivors convey the traumatic and painful images to apply them in order to understand the present. This section has demonstrated the ways in which the past is an object that is impelled to meet the requirement of the present. The scenarios in Southeast Asia show that at least two consequences. On the one hand, the establishment of the governmental imposition of knowledge that forges the official

memory, enacts the 'the Ideological-trauma', while on the other hand, in antagonism with the Ideological trauma, survivors opposed to the government open a horizontal vista to 'the Real-trauma'.

To demonstrate, in Vietnam, the governmental imposition of knowledge centred on the triumph and sacrificial deaths of the communists over external enemies, especially the French and the US. This official version of memory is the Ideological-trauma that serves Vietnamese patriotism and creates for the Vietnamese the gratifying belief in this official narrative of the nation. But the Vietnamese state's use of memory in this way has faced criticism and recalcitrance from the survivors who oppose the government. By proposing that the governmental representation of the experience of the Vietnam War is a mysticism that has omitted another perspective centred on a more radical version of the traumatic memory carried into the present by the surviving persons, anti-governmental survivors have used their memories of the past in a different fashion. The radical version of memory used by survivors erodes the sovereign power of the Vietnamese government with the aim of demanding a structural change to the political and social regime, that is, a shift from the one-party system to a multi-party system. To propose the Real-trauma is to attend to the subterranean history of the brutality of the re-education camp, 'the Oriental Auschwitz', a history which is concealed by the Vietnamese government. While the Vietnamese government has been proposing an Ideological-trauma by highlighting the mysticism and legendary character of North Vietnam's triumph in the Vietnam War, there are the surviving persons who decide not only to counterbalance the history of the Vietnam War, proposed singlehandedly by the government, but also the decision to recall the memory of the past is part of a political movement and an attempt to erode the legitimacy of the Vietnamese regime.

Cambodia is the second scenario to which the thesis's theoretical framework for understanding trauma and the political use of memory was applied. In a different fashion to Vietnam, the official memory or the so-called 'the Ideological-trauma' in Cambodia depends on silencing the history of the Khmer Rouge so as to create the illusion that the brutality of the Khmer Rouge cadres against their own people never happened. In chapter 3, I argued that the Ideological- trauma in Cambodian suggests that starvation and insufficient rations were the only trauma in the history of the country, due to the attempts to implement an agrarian, utopian society. This memory does not mention the human rights violations performed by the Pol Pot government. To avoid the possibility of fantasising that Cambodia is a country that is cleansed of its history of brutality, an oppositional narrative to the traumatised memory is firmly enacted by anti-governmental survivors. Chapter 3 told the story of a survivor named Chum Mey whose narrative and testimony with regards to his traumatic experiences in the S-21 prison camp is firmly rooted in a desire to make conspicuous the history of brutality and torture that happened during the Khmer Rouge administration from 1975-1979; and this is 'the Real-trauma' as defined in this thesis. Prominent in the case of Cambodia, and different from other case studies in this thesis, is that the testimony and narrative of survivors has led to the prosecution of perpetrators. Their narrative and testimony has gained acceptance from the international court and has led to penalties for high-ranking Khmer Rouge officials. The use of memory in the case of Cambodia shows how memory has been used to sustain and to avoid threats to the power of the current government, on the one hand, and it has been used in hostility to the government in favour of the justice of the survivors, on the other.

Myanmar and Thailand are respectively the third and fourth scenarios in which the Ideological-trauma and the Real-trauma as performative as the politicisation of memory are

caught in tensions. By labelling a group of protestors at the University of Rangoon on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1988 as communists and as means of sustaining the belief that a transition to democracy in Myanmar must only be brought about under the aegis of the government, this memory has been used even in the present to form part of the Myanmar's ideological trauma. That is to say, the death of protestors is to be taken as a political necessity on the part of the junta in order to suppress dissident citizens during the protests of 8<sup>th</sup> August 1988. By withdrawing from immersing in such ideological trauma, or, a state imposition of the official memory that rationalises the killing of protestors, survivors of the incident have undertaken this as a political mission in order to find justice for their comrades. It is suggested in Chapter 4 that recalling memory of trauma, stemming from a crackdown against them, is seen as a use of memory to fracture the ideological trauma prescribed by the junta in order to reveal the Real trauma. The use of memory is not without a political motif objective as it has been used to denounce the current political regime in Myanmar.

The use of memory to serve the political ideology and beliefs of the present is conspicuous also in the case of Thailand. The Ideological-trauma in Thailand starts from the outlook that protestors at the Thammasat University on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 were communists conspiring to demoralise the Thai monarchy. The crackdown on protestors was justified in order to keep the Thai monarchy safe. Although the crackdown on protestors is traumatic, the governmental imposition of memory makes use of this traumatic event as something non-traumatic, which means that violence imposed by the government against protestors is accepted and rationalised under the notion of national stability. This issue is seen in terms of the first tower of the Real outlined in Chapter 5, according to which witnessing trauma does not cause trauma to the witnesses because those who were killed were- in Agamben's terms- bare lives.



This issue is counterbalanced, however- as detailed in Chapter 5, by the outlook that the survivors have been actively transformed from bare lives to share involvement in a political transition from constitutional monarchy to full and mature democracy. The use of memory of the 6<sup>th</sup> October in the account of the anti-monarchical survivor adjusts the narrative of the past to meet with anti-royalist ideology in the present. By suggesting that the Thai monarchy participated in the massacre, the anti-monarchical survivors' redemption of 6<sup>th</sup> October massacre meets the thesis's definition of the Real-trauma, that is, the shocking image of trauma and the unbearable image of trauma, which is different from the Ideological Trauma in which the image of trauma is prescribed by the government and is rationalised as a political necessity. A recollection of this Real-trauma is only for the survivors' political attempts to demoralise monarchy and to demand a political transition from constitutional monarchy to mature democracy. Therefore, the case studies ranging from Vietnam to Thailand show ultimately that when the past is recalled to serve the present, it is not the truth of the past, thus, there is no master-signifier of the truth of the traumatic incident either derived from the Ideological-trauma or the Real-trauma.

*Scepticism to Social Harmony*

Social harmony is a utopianism in which antagonism and atrocity are not constituted in the political and social relationships between the government and its citizens. It is ideally a transcendental condition whereby sustained peaceful co-existence will be achieved. A social harmony is inscribed as a socio-politico condition of humanism that both governments and citizens anticipate. In practice, it is a mutual effort to create social harmony as a consolidated

vision of reality. Practically, it is produced through governmental order which is a vital condition for social harmony to operate. A condition in which social harmony would remain politically and socially possible rests on the coordination between governmental order and the consent of citizens to that order. The governmental order must place itself as a social normativity in which its superlative vision is to manage the population so as to ensure that all citizens can sustain their livelihood within the state; a political entity which thereby guarantees great support without any opposition to it. The governmental order is established as a political certitude in which the government establishes itself as a single agency capable of exercising its full authority and by displaying the government itself as a single agency asking for the cooperation of its citizens.

The governmental order is an institution of the modern state that uses every available resources to influence their subjects with the state-sanctioned history of nations, the memory of nation, the myth of the nation, and so on. As a consequence, myths and legends of a nation through which the ascendancies of the past are incorporated into contemporary order, incorporated in the official memory endorsed by the government, are shared with citizens. As such, social harmony is eventually an outcome of the government's construction of the official narrative, and its effect is to produce a set of political beliefs without either scepticism or critical inquiry from citizens. A magnificent story of the nation that sustains itself by producing a national faith is not a novelty. A consideration of this prevails in the assessment that such notions are 'the utopian fantasy'<sup>3</sup> in this political account laid out in Žižek's 'critique of ideology', where he advocates a negation of the governmental order that tends to prescribe itself as a singularity and a creation of the obscene enjoyment in subjects.

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<sup>3</sup> Chris McMillan, 'Changing fantasies: Žižek and the limits of democracy' in *Žižek and Law*, Laurence de Sutter (ed.) (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 64.

If the social harmony is intertwined with the Žižekian utopian fantasy that conceals the Real, this will direct us Jenny Edkins's view of the ideological establishment as 'social closure'<sup>4</sup> in the pursuit of its 'linearity of time'<sup>5</sup>. This form of utopianism, Edkins warns, is nothing except a production of social tranquillity that entails an effacement of the traumatised effect of the Lacanian Real. This is what is imagined by Žižek as the post-political category in which every aspect of national administration is controlled by the professional knowledge of a group of technocrats including 'expertise' in politics.<sup>6</sup> Conceptually, post-politics features as the gratifying pleasure of the social fantasy because it conceals the traumatised Real.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the paradigm of post-politics induces the subjects to envisage a society free from conflict since it relies on the exclusion of the traumatised image of the Real, thus elevating post-politics itself to the status of the desirable Other. The desire on the Other is possible for subjects because the lack seems to be unconceived to the subjects, which paradoxically means that the Other always-already constituted with the lack but the Other is excellent at suppressing its own constituted lack. The phallic image is the lack, but its success in hiding the lack – the utmost traumatising of the social unhappiness – makes it sustainable as the appearance of the lack without lack. This becomes a description of social harmony as the Other by which the utmost character of the post-political administration is to make its appearance before the subjects as the lack without lack.

The four political scenarios concerning the politics of survivors in Southeast Asia are sceptical responses to the assumption of social harmony. It is through the political role of survivors that social harmony is challenged and critiqued. What survivors in Vietnam,

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<sup>4</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism & International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16.

<sup>6</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008), 40.

<sup>7</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), 118.

Cambodian, Myanmar, and Thailand have in common is that any political orders that hope to eradicate antagonism and conflict are impossible. In other words, the post-politics that forms itself as the Other is the lack. In the case of Vietnam, the Communist Party is unable to cover the lack in its official narrative, given the situation that many Vietnamese living in the diaspora relentlessly challenge this story about the Vietnam War, including highlighting the human rights violation committed by the Viet Cong, human rights violations which many of the survivors themselves experienced. Chapter 2 suggested that the Vietnamese governmental order cannot expect to continue its functionality and sustain its political operation in a form of social harmony since its social harmony is a lack and it is ultimately unable to evade the internal antagonism embedded in it. This is also exemplified in the case of Cambodia. Chapter 3 suggested that the country that has been under the total control of the Cambodian People Party (CPP) can be described as post-political since the administration comprises of such political and economic experts as Hor Nam Hong, Sok An, Sar Kheng, Sun Chanthol, and Kieth Meng. The very counter power to this post-politics, which aims at disclosing the CPP's fantasising image is prominent in the political mission of activist groups such as COMFREL, ADHOC, LICADHO, and KNLFF, all of these activist groups having been led by survivors of the Khmer Rouge.

Insofar as the politics of survivors in those countries have culminated in undermining governmental orders, the Vietnamese and Cambodian governments have been unable to sustain a consolidated imaginary of the country. The politics of survivors in those countries have led to the unveiling of a signifier of trauma; a particular configuration of trauma that remains ineradicable in the mind of the non-governmental survivors. A trauma emanating from the perspectives of the non-governmental survivors is a signifier of trauma that does not promote social harmony. It is to be seen as a signifier of trauma that reflects that the social harmony is

the Other constituted by lack and the Other which can be destabilised from inside. The cases of Myanmar and Thailand serve as political scenarios in which we can observe the undeniable conflict between social harmony and the signifier of a trauma. In other words, Myanmar and Thailand are political scenarios that enable us to observe that social harmony is not an incompleteness because there is the signifier of trauma that reveals that the lack is constituted in social harmony.

The case of Myanmar as detailed in Chapter 4 is distinct and remains answerable to our concerns here since the military government has been unsuccessful in making subjects complicit to its rule. Since the junta came to power, many dissident Burmese have engaged in political protests against military rule. Myanmar activists, including survivors living overseas, have released information through the internet about the history of massacre at Rangoon University on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1988, which becomes known as 8-8-88, claiming that military elites were responsible for the massacre. This information, which can be seen as dissidence to the Burmese social harmony, is a point that is indicative of governmental repression; but, the information is, paradoxically, the underlying account of the signifier of trauma that at the same time represents itself as a reflection of the impossibility of social harmony in Myanmar. The case of Thailand in Chapter 5 presents the political issues in which the Thai monarchy is apparently a manifestation of Thai social harmony. This, however, is in doubt for some radical survivors from the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 who conjecture that the Thai monarchy had an affiliation with the military government, ordering the crackdown at the Thammasat University. Indeed, the significant matter for this thesis, however, is not to ascertain whether the Thai monarchy was responsible for the incident. Rather, of far more importance is the theoretical discussion and the observation that the politics of survivors of political violence in Thailand provides the same account as in the

studies of the three neighbouring countries. That is to say, Thai survivors and their political movements are significant as they are a controversial issue that affirms the theoretical assumption that the social harmony is not possible.

## **Survivors and a Memory of Trauma**

### *A Representation of Trauma*

Memory of a traumatic incident demonstrates the complexity of mental phenomena and highlights the idiosyncratic aspects of mental experience. This section explores the way that survivors represent trauma. Representing trauma coexists with the recollection of and emotional reencounters with trauma. Survivors need to associate their memories, lives, and remembrances once again with traumas in order to represent them. In this sense, memory displays and endorses itself as the referent agent of trauma. Memory performs a great role in negating the absence of trauma. It must rely on language to mediate and illuminate trauma. In other words, representing trauma is an attempt to remove trauma from the impossibility to access to predispose it in light of a concretisation of trauma. Representing trauma reflects survivors' rationality of thought.<sup>8</sup> Memory as encoded as the referent agent of trauma is the product of intelligence<sup>9</sup>; it marks survivors' rationalisation of thought in illuminating the impossibility. Representing trauma with the support of visual mediums such as arts, films, and war memorials, enables the representation of the past in the present.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> George W.F. Hegel, 'Philosophy of Mind' in *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, ed. Michael Rossington et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 89.

<sup>9</sup> Hegel, "Philosophy of Mind," 88.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 8.

Visual mediums such as arts, films, memoirs, and war memorials, become historical and visual signs of modernity. Those cultural artefacts serve not only as storages of survivors' memories of traumas, but also as a sign of modernity in a sense that memorial events are extended to common people and no longer restricted to monarchical memorials. This means that, as Reinhart Koselleck puts it, to observe "the transition from a monarchical memorial to a memorial for the people e.g. the tombs of the 'unknown soldier'"<sup>11</sup> including the fallen combatants and other ordinary people is to witness a visible sign of modernity and at the same time a collapse of monarchy. Moreover, the difference between a representation of trauma in an aesthetic mode by using referent agents and the psychic structure that psychoanalysis calls 'the repetitive compulsion' or 'obsessive neurosis' is that while the former refers to 'the work of recollection'<sup>12</sup>, that is, the creative artwork aimed at revealing that trauma is constituted as part of cultural production, the latter only prescribes the argument in which trauma is lingering in and dominating the mind of sufferers without seeking an outlet in acting it out culturally and aesthetically. To give the clearest example of the difference between the two categories of thought, there is enormous difference between artistic survivors, who utilise cultural products as a means to convey knowledge about trauma, and other categories of survivors such as veterans whose obsessive traumatic experiences keep them awake with [bad] dreams, and, who have been obsessed with memory of their comrades' deaths or their own defeats.

A representation of trauma through visual mediums reformulates the theory of trauma from the drive for death to the drive for life.<sup>13</sup> This encourages us to comprehend trauma not only in terms of paying witness to death and violence, but also as a creative force to preserve life.

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<sup>11</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, "War Memorials: Identity Formations of the Survivors," in *Theories of Memory*, 368

<sup>12</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgetting," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Olick et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 478.

<sup>13</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 5.

Cathy Caruth points out the return of a traumatic experience so as to embrace it as a chance to master the impossibility of grasping it in the first place, which means that creative acts, including aesthetic practice, are a chance for survivors to master and grasp the enigmatic character of trauma.<sup>14</sup> The thesis discusses the representation of trauma in the chapters of Vietnam and Myanmar, which suggests that the Vietnam War survivors living abroad such as Huynh, Nguyen, Dam, and Danh have created artworks that enable them to transform their de-subjectivised being in order to retrieve their subjectivity, which is recognised by Jenny Edkins as ‘the personhood’<sup>15</sup>. These artworks incorporate the culpable, violence, and the repressed memory. Similarly, the case of Myanmar demonstrates in particular the artwork of Htein Lin, whose artwork entitled as ‘A Show of Hands’, uses hands to symbolise the collective painful memory of the surviving persons from the August 8<sup>th</sup> 1988 bloodshed. I draw on these two scenarios to point out that their resemblance and similarity lies in the relationship between the representations of trauma performed by survivors and what Caruth emphasises as a chance to reflect and grasp a cusp of trauma from the impossibility to grasp it in the first place. Cultural agents not only serve as an outlet that enables trauma to act out, but also as a reflection of survivors’ rationality and thoughts on trauma so as to mark a sign of modernity as argued by Koselleck and to justify the argument that artworks reflect survivors’ human dignity; a salvation from ‘the de-personhood’ in favour of what Edkins describes as ‘the personhood’, perhaps.

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<sup>14</sup> Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Jenny Edkins, “Objects among objects,” in *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR*, ed. Naeem Inayatullah, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group), 29.



*Collective Memory and the Site of Memory*

The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs defines collective memory as “a socially constructed notion [which] endures and draws its strength from its base in a coherent body of people.”<sup>16</sup> The past can be illuminated in the present through collective memory and its performance as crucial mediators in reiterating the dead temporality of the past in the present so as to prevent the past being forgotten. Collective memory is a political consequence of the explicit and implicit efforts of the individuals as group members, whose endeavours are to sustain and insist on the remembering of the past in specific social and political contexts. Why does the recognition on Halbwachs’s collective memory become a rationality of memory in the present? The answer can be suggested in terms of political responsibility of the group members. The political responsibility of survivors, members of the same group, requires introspection with regard to their own experiences, to mourn the past, and to prevent these memories being forgotten. Survivors form political groups to mourn the past because only those who share the same experience of violence are legitimised to mourn the past without anticipating others to mourn for them. A political responsibility of survivors in mourning the past resonated with a description that the group needs to mourn it themselves because no members of other groups will mourn a trauma and a loss for them. This suggestion resonates with Halbwachs’s argument, which entails that “every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time.”<sup>17</sup> The temporal structure of the Halbwachian memory can be described as the redemption of loss as a political action embedded in the indeterminateness and in the fracture of

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<sup>16</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22.

<sup>17</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 22.

time, with the explosive desire in addressing to the present the devastating losses that the traumatised subjects, the survivors, have experienced.<sup>18</sup>

Encountering a force that threatens to dismantle it, the existing social fabric can be reconstituted from its deconstruction. In terms of the revival of traumatised memory through the political movements of survivors, the existing social fabric is deconstructed by survivors recounting memories of the past. Social thought is philosophically practical and innovates only when there is a movement that accelerates a rethinking process, leading somehow to deconstruction in the initial phase but eventually endorsing social reconstitution in other phases. This means that a disentanglement of the social fabric can be remedied through the radical thought adjacent to it, that is, the radical thought that deconstructs and tears the social fabric apart in its initial phase will be the same force that plays a key role in social reconstruction and shifting social perception in other phases. Halbwachs makes this point when he argues, at the end of his major work *On Collective Memory* (1952), that a recollection of collective memory and remembrance being practised controversially in a current temporal structure can result in social reconstruction, and, hence creating new perceptions for this society.<sup>19</sup> Recollection, which is effectively the unravelling of the concealing aspect of the society, and which leads to social reconstruction is an effect of a consciousness aspiring to break with the present. It is a breaking with the past that becomes preliminarily a pre-emptive condition of the emergence of what Pierre Nora calls ‘a site of memory’ (*lieux de mémoire*). A site of memory, Nora suggests, is a deliberate, conscious attempt to escape the continuation of the top-down imposition of memory, which poses a problem to socially hierarchized memory, and succeeds in embodying a certain site whereby the resisting memory creates negativity to the continuity of the socially hierarchized

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<sup>18</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 183.

<sup>19</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 189.

memory.<sup>20</sup> Far from preserving its initial status quo, memory is fundamentally an opening to challenge that yields towards dialectic,<sup>21</sup> a significant movement that creates a counter power to hierarchical social imposition and manipulation, which thereby creates ‘a site of memory’; a necessity of the force of social resistance operated through recollection, which thereby gives way to a regeneration of social memory.

The thesis finds that the concepts of ‘the collective memory’ and ‘a site of memory’ are useful in describing the political movement of survivors in relation to their insistence on a memory of a traumatic incident in the present. The clearest example is Viet Tan, a political group formed in the Vietnamese diaspora aimed at challenging the communist government in Hanoi. As argued in chapter 2, the Vietnam Reform Party (Viet Tan) comprises veterans and Vietnamese refugees, and they have a countervailing memory to the government in Hanoi by declaring that the narrative of war informed by the Hanoi government is illusory. Forming a memory in opposition to the government’s official narrative is to produce a controversial narrative in Vietnamese society. It is the type of memory that collaborates with Nora’s ‘site of memory’ and meets with Halbwachs’s ‘collective memory’ that urges opposition to the hierarchized memory imposed by the communist government. By the same token, the scenario in Cambodia in chapter 3 offers the scenario, and the testimonies of survivors from the S-21, a secret prison established during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. It is the testimony that performs itself as a practice of recalling a collective memory of S-21 survivors as a declaration of the concealing element of history, intent to be confidential to the Cambodian people organised by the Pol Pot and the Hun Sen governments.

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<sup>20</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire,” in *Theories of memory*, 144.

<sup>21</sup> Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 145-146.

The situation in Myanmar discussed in chapter 4 also entwines with the situation of her neighbours: Vietnam and Cambodia. It can be noticed in Aung San Suu Kyi's speech during the electoral campaign in 2015 that a traumatic memory, which is ineradicable from the minds of the survivors of the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1988 crackdown, becomes a compelling force and a motivation for members of the NLD party to win the general election and to fulfil the mission of the student protests in 1988. These collective disturbances and affections of trauma that still remain in the present can be observed in Thailand, discussed in chapter 5, where survivors of the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1973 are actively and politically engaged in using their memories of the past as a justification to challenge the monarchical influence on politics. Their testimonies and narratives, which are derived from their experiences of state violence, are understood as 'a collective memory' and as 'a site of memory'. Testimonies and narratives of the Thai survivors are not only 'collective memory' and 'site of memory' in the sense of the sharing of pain and agony among survivors, but also their significances are consistent with Halbwachs's and Nora's concepts because those testimonies and narratives maintained by survivors all induce the possibility of deconstructing and reconstructing an existing social fabric.

### **Survivors as a Lacanian Subject**

#### *(Dis-)communicating Trauma: Conscious, Unconscious, and the Body*

On the basis of a psychoanalytic assumption that there are active parts of the mind that we- including the subjects themselves- immediately fail to examine, these parts of the mind were

understood as the unconscious.<sup>22</sup> The hypothesis understands the unconscious as dynamic, consisting of mental activities such as a repression, a craving for wish-fulfilment, transference, counter-transference, imaginations, and the libido, which constitute a vital part of the subject's mental reality. It is nonetheless hypothesised that these mental forces do not operate in the same areas or through the same forces as consciousness- such as bodily experience, awareness, perception, and so on. Consciousness is mainly a hypothesis about subjects' self-awareness of their mental activities in contrast to the existence of unconscious, which assumes forms and dynamic mental activities that are (sometimes only occasionally) overlooked by subjects, the existence of which are often not realised by subjects themselves.<sup>23</sup> Unconscious is meaningful to the subjects precisely as an acceptance of the scientific knowledge of the mind, which stresses the discovery of the mental activities that always awake and stimulate the minds of human beings, but which are not known fully by the subjects. The mental landscape thus appears to be swiftly distinguished into two areas<sup>24</sup> in which perceptions and awareness are equated with the meaning of consciousness whereas the unconscious refers to obscure mental activities without measures reveal or quantify its existence in the form of speech, grammar, and words.<sup>25</sup>

This argument described earlier recalls issues discussed in chapter 1, in which the thesis urges that the representation of mental activities comprises of the representations of consciousness and the unconscious. These mental activities preoccupied with different forms of representation have been described in terms of "the conscious presentation comprises of the presentation of thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious

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<sup>22</sup> Sigmund Freud, *On Metapsychology: the theory of psychoanalysis; 'Beyond the pleasure principle,' 'The ego and the id' and other works* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 19-20.

<sup>23</sup> Sigmund Freud, "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis (1912)," in *On Metapsychology*, 50-52.

<sup>24</sup> Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious (1915)," in *On Metapsychology*, 172.

<sup>25</sup> Freud, "The Unconscious (1915)," 207.

presentation is the presentation of the thing alone”.<sup>26</sup> Because unconscious entails no word-image attached to it, unconscious which is known as ‘the thing alone’ without any possibilities of language to present it, remains misrecognised by the subjects even after verbalisation and the activities of speech by the subjects are already expressed. As representing the enigmatic image encumbered in the horizon of the unconscious is impossible, it is different from the conscious in which linguistic representation aids in connecting the image inside to the outside, and the unconscious that is unable to make a full entry into the symbolic order falls back into the Real<sup>27</sup>, the entity of the linguistically non-articulable in full form but anticipating to be known in the symbolic order if there are any possibilities. This interpretation offers the thought that the unconscious remains in and as the Real, not because the symbolic order intends to castrate it, or because subjects intend to hide the unconscious from us, but rather to indicate the limitation in terms of language, grammar, words that make it impossible for the unconscious to be registered in the symbolic order. It is the symbolic order that holds symptoms of the unconscious, due to the language that prevents the image of the unconscious from being replaced with another image. It should be stated clearly that subjects do not know that they are unable to express to others what they have thought in their unconscious because simply relying on language leads to the unconscious being denied within the symbolic order, and, then unconscious constantly, unchangingly emerges in and as the Real. It is the misrecognition in terms of the unconscious unable to register fully within the symbolic order, which results in the authentic exchange being replaced by a false imaginary of the unconscious. The false imaginary of the unconscious that

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<sup>26</sup> Freud, “The Unconscious (1915)”, 207.

<sup>27</sup> Lacan, *The Psychoses*, 12-13.

enters into the symbolic as an artificial image of the Real replaces the Real as it is while the symbolic order presumes the artificial Real to be the authentic meaning of the Real.<sup>28</sup>

The scenario of trauma is in need of speech and requires the capacity of linguistic representation to illustrate the disastrous experiences of the traumatised subjects. Representing trauma by resorting to language parallels the field of speech in which the field of speech itself is visible as concrete discourse, comprising of a meaning of trauma that is capable of unveiling itself to others with the awareness of the traumatised subjects in full and of the dialectic to the transparency in which trauma is seen as mystic in character and, as such, unable to shed light completely on the field of speech. Although the attempt to express it by the subjects is observable; the latter is the reality of the subject that is not capable of being articulated fully in speech.<sup>29</sup> The former indicates that it is consciousness that maintain the tangible character of trauma engendered by speech whereas the latter implies the psychological reality of the unconscious that not only incorporates trauma within it, but also indicates that trauma located in the unconscious hinders the representation of trauma in full. By defining trauma as a progressive and authentic effacement,<sup>30</sup> the meaning of trauma is at odds with language and consciousness that seek to draw trauma out; in other words, trauma is what is misrecognised [*méconnu*] by the subject.<sup>31</sup> Precisely the point here is that a trauma is the unconscious of the subject and if the unconscious of the subject is rooted in the conceptual thought that the subject is ‘the discourse of the other’,<sup>32</sup> then this means that trauma can be taken as the discourse of the other. In this line of

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<sup>28</sup> Lacan, *The Psychoses*, 15

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis,” in *Ecrits; A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1977), 49.

<sup>30</sup> Lacan, “The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis,” 52.

<sup>31</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book II: The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (London and New York: W.W. Norton Company, Inc., 1991), 43.

<sup>32</sup> Lacan, “The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis,” 55.

thought, trauma does not converge with the subject's consciousness of it, but trauma is something that transcends what is experienced subjectively and consciously by subjects. Trauma is something that only the body of the subject embraces in full; the truth of trauma cannot be fully known in the field of speech.

To make the issue clearer, by referring to trauma as the experience beyond the one that the subjects have experience of, this issue is not only a problem in terms of the difficulty of the narrative of trauma, but also in respect to the 'Split location of trauma'. The 'Split location of trauma' was highlighted in chapter 1 as the difference between trauma located in consciousness and unconscious, a phenomenon illuminated by the early Lacanian concept of 'the Splitting subject'. Lacan describes 'the Splitting subject' by pointing out to the gap within language. That is to say, 'the Splitting subject' is observed in between the place of 'the inter-said' (the subject's symbolic communication to others), where there lies the place of 'the intra-said (the lack or something within the thought of the subject that is unable to be communicated to others) which interrupts a circuit of full communication.<sup>33</sup> He continues that in relation to the unconscious, self-aware consciousness that relies on language does not overlap with the unconscious because unconscious acts as a negation of language including the conscious,<sup>34</sup> which thereby causes a shortage and gap in the circuit of communication whenever the subjects complete their speaking, and this becomes a space where 'the Splitting subject' is observable. In other words, under the assumption that language cannot incorporate the entire and the meaningful world located in the unconscious of the subjects, this problem of *Logos* points out

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<sup>33</sup> Jacques Lacan, "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious," in *Ecrits*, 299.

<sup>34</sup> Lacan, "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious," 297.



that the subject, according to Lacan, does not know that what he or she is saying is a lack.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence, the location of trauma in relation to ‘the Splitting subject’ highlights the ambiguous location and the impossible task of locating trauma; a refusal of the predisposition to depend on the speaking and artefacts produced by the subjects as the complete and adequate expression of trauma.

It must be noted that our analyses of trauma in relation to the psychoanalytical thoughts of conscious and unconscious are significant to the four case studies of the thesis. In the case of Vietnam, the suggestion to look at the distinctions and scission in terms of the location of trauma is observed in the artworks of Vietnamese diasporas where the artworks are interpreted psychoanalytically and conceptually as the Splitting location of the expression of trauma. In a sense, it is unclear whether the display of trauma contains the active thoughts of the artist that are known corporeally, but are not represented in their artworks. For instance, it can be asked whether the painting of a Vietnamese survivor from the Vietnam War, Binh Danh, with the use of a grass-leaf image-content to signifying the meaning of trauma is a representation of trauma known to him or is there something else that his body knows but is unable to communicate fully in his artwork, given the limitation in terms of language and the creation of the cultural text?

Another example can be found in Chapter 2, the artwork of Long Nguyen, which urges one to think critically and psychoanalytically about whether his artwork that shows the experience of boat people is really sufficient to depict the traumatic incident that took place in the sea or whether there are traumatic images in the sea that yet remain unknown, beyond his artwork? Psychoanalysis critically questions whether his representation of boat people’s trauma is really capable of illuminating the trauma that those can feel in their bodies, fully and

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<sup>35</sup> Lacan, “The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious,” 299.

completely? In addition, Hong Dam's artwork, which she claims is an expression of her childhood memory fleeing from Vietnam by boat, is another interesting example. Although it is not incorrect to say that Dam is a survivor of the traumatic incident, it is incorrect to claim that her artwork represents a full image of trauma that she had experienced or felt. Following Lacan, we can say that Dam only feels trauma corporeally but she cannot express what she feels entirely insofar as only her vehicle for her trauma to be communicated is speech. A psychoanalytical analysis suggests that while it remains true that her body does not betray her from feeling a trauma, it is the field of speech and image that becomes the field in which her representation of trauma, the agony that she feels inside her body, is prevented from being communicated.

Therefore, it is the limitation of the field of speech that makes the representation of trauma, which remains in the unconscious, largely inadequate. Psychoanalysis suggests that we should not be overly concerned with ascertaining whether the subject intends only to screen out some aspects of trauma through a process of a memory-recall while intending to conceal other aspects of trauma to others. On the contrary, it asks whether the subject's representation of trauma is capable of reaching its full circuit of communicating the trauma that subjects have felt in their bodies. In terms of analysing Chum Mey's narrative and testimony about his experience of being tortured in secret prison, psychoanalysis calls on us to ask the same question as was asked of Vietnamese artists living in the diaspora. Following this theory, Chum Mey's testimony of trauma represents a lack in his authentic feeling on trauma that he feels in his body, meaning that his testimony of trauma conveyed to us is inadequate, including to Chum Mey himself, to grasp and feel trauma as the Real as such. In this sense, trauma is the reality of the psyche which cannot be articulated fully in speech, and yet remains in the Real as the unconscious. To continue to explore the issue, Chapter 4 suggested that the testimonies of trauma by the Burmese living in

exile such as Khin Saw Win, Aung Din, and Min Zin may be inadequate to represent trauma that they corporeally feel in their bodies; the testimonies and the perceptions of trauma constantly have a gap separating it, if it relies on language.

However, chapter 4 cautions that it remains unclear within narratives of trauma whether the subject expresses trauma from the conscious or the unconscious. Chapter 4 explores the narrative of Min Ko Naing. It is unclear whether his narrative of his own self-victimisation in the massacre is a form of identity construction originating from his conscious or his unconscious because the subject may assume victimhood in relation to the incident with awareness (consciously) or without awareness (unconsciously). In chapter 5, the case of Thailand centred on the testimonies of such anti-royalist survivors as Winichakul and Jeamteerasakul. Similar to the previous scenarios of the politics of survivors that have already been discussed, psychoanalysis urges one to question whether their testimonies and corporeal perceptions of trauma creates a gap between the linguistic representation of trauma through their testimonies and the trauma that they have felt in their bodies. That is to say, the point is precisely whether Winichakul's and Jeamteerasakul's testimonies are sufficient in communicating what they really feel in their bodies to others.

*Symptom and the object petit a*

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1964), *the object petit a* is the split of something that eludes the subject's gaze following the encounter in the structure of desire between the subject and the object cause of desire.<sup>36</sup> In relation to the field of desire, it can be said that the object that maintains itself before the subject's gaze in a form of the object cause of

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<sup>36</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 72.

desire appears to have a hole inside it. In other words, *the object petit a* directs the subject to be susceptible to the lack and inconsistency of the object cause of desire and, as a consequence, the object cause of desire presented to the subject is a presentation in a form of misapprehension and misrecognition.<sup>37</sup> As a result, what is extremely sensitive in the structure of desire is that the subject fails to contact the lack constituted in the object cause of desire that appears to them. What remains a captivating feature of *the object petit a*, however, is that the concept is not meaningful as the object of the non-human entities desired by humans. The concept considers *the object petit a* as a human being so as to define *the object petit a* as human and not simply as a non-human entity. This leads to the question: how does a human being become *the object petit a*? A response to this question can be found in the relationship between the Cartesian *cogito* and the castration of the *cogito* to access its own thought.<sup>38</sup> This tension between *cogito* and the castration that precludes the subject having access to their own thoughts culminates in another related conclusion. That is to say, the subject cannot absorb their own thought in relation to what they have already known and what they have already thought as the apprehension of their own thought. Rather than presuming the thought that the subjects already know as the accessibility to thought, what the subjects need to presume is *the thought that subjects already know but such thought turns out to be something that subject is supposed not to know*. In other words, what the subject must presume to think is not only the thought from the inside, but also to contact the thought that was always-already domestic to the subject yet is unrealised by the subject. To overcome the castration of the subject's access to its own thought, the subject needs to adopt another perception that is not fixed in the subject in order to make contact with the thought that

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<sup>37</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, 73.

<sup>38</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, 80.

exists outside the subject.<sup>39</sup> But accessing this thought availing outside the subject is not as easy as simply to highlight that the subject is in need of other subjects in order to access the subject's own thought. To make contact with the elements of thought outside of the subject, or, to contact the element of thought that the subject already knows but becomes unknown to the subject, this means that there is thought that always-already belong to the subjects but the subject fails to recognise it in the subject's own thought, let alone present it to other subjects.<sup>40</sup> In effect, the existence of thought that is already domestic to the subject, but eludes the subject's own grasp is the 'a', *the object petit a*.

At this point, *the object petit a* has constituted of twofold meaning. In the first meaning, *the object petit a* reflects that the thought of the subject is the crucible factor that marks the existence of the subject in the symbolic order. The thought of the subject reflects the subject's existence in relation to other subjects in the symbolic order. As long as the existence of the subject in the symbolic order is likely not to recognise *the object petit a*, the subjects that appear in the symbolic order, presenting themselves before us, are incomplete subjects; the subjects that fail to represent a thought they already know are subjects constituted with lack in the symbolic order. Therefore, another meaning of *the object petit a* comprises of the lack to the thought that the subjects already know. In the second meaning, subjects who fail to represent the thought that they already know in the symbolic order, means that subjects that appear in the symbolic order are subjects that have an incomplete existence before us and before the symbolic order. The radical point, however, is not that the subjects do know that their existence in the symbolic order is constituted by lack. Nor is the problem that subjects intend to conceal a thought they know entirely from the symbolic order. Rather, the problem lies in the shocking assumption, presumed

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<sup>39</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, 80.

<sup>40</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, 81.

from the discourse of the Real, is that the subjects do not know that their existence in the symbolic order is incomplete. The subjects may assume in their own hallucinations that their representations of thoughts, creating signifiers in the symbolic order, are complete processes, but in fact their representations of thoughts never reach a full circuit of communication.

Insofar as those representations of thought are not in contact with the thought that the subject does know but fails to present in the symbolic order, this circuit of communication is castrated and cannot be complete in the symbolic order. Following psychoanalytic assumptions, this means precisely that the subject that symbolises or fictionalises itself in the symbolic order is illusive.<sup>41</sup> This means that the subject's access to his or her own thought is permanently unsuccessful. As long as the subject fails to grasp or to present what they really have thought in their minds in the symbolic order, this means that other subjects, including researchers, still do not know what the subjects really have thought. The consequence of this is that subjects that appear before us are the subjects that only belong to the first meaning of *the object petit a*, the subjects that co-exist and are assumed to illuminate their thought in full in the symbolic order. As described in the second meaning of *the object petit a*, the subjects that appear before us are not subjects that are able to connect to their own thought. This means that some of their thoughts continue to elude them. The subjects that appear before us – presenting their individual thoughts, ideas, testimonies, narratives before us – are symptomatic and indeed are subjects that we cannot accept as truthful without caution. It is the second meaning of *the object petit a* that directs us to the lack and inconsistency of the subjects appearing in front of us, presenting subjectivity as a form of misapprehension and misrecognition not only to us, but also to themselves.

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<sup>41</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, 83.

Under the concept of *the object petit a*, psychoanalysis once again urges the thesis to diagnose the subjectivity of survivors, particularly regarding to their authenticity and existence in the symbolic order. By referring to survivors of the four scenarios of Southeast Asia as *the object petit a*, this suggests that their existence in the symbolic order is defined by lack, alienation, and misrecognition. Insofar as psychoanalysis urges us to think of the inaccessibility to thought that might occur for survivors as subjects, in this sense, relatively, survivors and their existence are not only a lack in front of our gazes on survivors, but also that this lack occurs even to survivors themselves. To analyse, the case of Vietnam shows the appearance in the symbolic order of survivors seeking to overthrow the communist government, however this hatred of the communist government means that survivors do not access the whole of the thought that they probably have about the trauma of the Vietnam War e.g. comradeship, love, death, and the meaning of the life that they have endured. Only reciting narratives hostile to the communist government prevents the realisation- both to themselves and also to others- that survivors' memories contain something more than a hatred of communism.

The case of Cambodia, discussed in chapter 3, suggests an analysis of the mentality of survivors. The concept of *the object petit a* leads to an awareness that, for survivors devoting their lives to NGOs, by dedicating their entire lives to the development of democracy in the country, this may prevent them- as well as others around them- from accessing other aspects of trauma that these survivors have in their minds. Perhaps those aspects of trauma, such as how they overcome starvation, how they escaped arrest, and so on, are the Real and the irreducible that escapes our gaze upon those aspects of trauma because those aspects of the Real are replaced by survivors' identification of themselves as devoting their lives to democracy in Cambodia. Here, by simply reducing the meaning of survivors only to those who have political motivations

to democratise civic life in the country is a foreclosure of the trauma that survivors have in their minds.

The psychoanalytic concept of *the object petit a* is also visible to an interruption of the existence of the subjects in the symbolic order. There is notably a gap between subjects that show up themselves in the symbolic order and the subjects as facing a trauma, the Real, that people do know this but avoid talking about it in order to maintain the subjects in the symbolic order in relation to people's expectation. The scenario in Myanmar is explored as an extension of this issue, through the concept of *the object petit a*, by suggesting that the appearance of the democratic survivors such as Suu Kyi, Ko Naing including others are indefinite. Presenting their subjectivities through their engagement with the democratic movement in the symbolic order, creating themselves as signifiers of democracy, hinders both survivors' and others' attempts to access trauma. We can suggest that as long as Suu Kyi has been accepted and symbolised by the Burmese as a democratic figure, the democratic figure of Suu Kyi is 'a cause of desire' for the Burmese, opposing military rule for the sake of democracy making her- and other survivors of 8-8-88 massacre- the object cause of desire. Suu Kyi's status is sustained only insofar as she maintains herself as a democratic figure as expected in the structure of desire, and as anticipated by her supporters in the symbolic order. People in Myanmar do know that Suu Kyi has faced trauma but they do not like Suu Kyi as a person facing trauma. Rather, only Suu Kyi fighting for democracy is acceptable as her genuine subjectivity as an object cause of desire from the point of view of her supporters. While Suu Kyi faced the trauma of her father being assassinated, and this is a story of the Real that people do know, her support is based on the suppression of the story in which Suu Kyi identifies herself as a girl deprived of her father, although this story is traumatic to Suu Kyi herself.



By connecting the concept of *the object petit a* to the case study of Thailand, it can be suggested that the appearance in the symbolic order of anti-monarchical survivors may have consisted of self-splitting, misrecognition, and self-alienation. By presenting themselves as antagonistic to the monarchy, the Thai survivors from 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 may not realise that their political movement and representations are only desired by their followers only insofar as they maintain their political perspective as a radical movement aiming to overthrow the monarchy. This means that desire on the Thai survivors is fixed and anchored as long as those survivors retain their anti-monarchical identity. But such an anchoring point in terms of declaring their existences in the symbolic order as only desirable based on anti-monarchical identities curtails the possibility of thinking critically about other radical incidents. That is to say, only indulging in the ideology of overthrowing the monarchy based on the accusations of the monarchy's involvement in the massacre, may lead survivors to express a narrow history of the massacre that survivors themselves know to have a wider scope. Although survivors know the history of massacre more widely than simply the monarchical involvement in politics, historical discussion about the massacre by survivors becomes desperately fixated on monarchical intervention into politics. As survivors only see themselves having a responsibility to overthrow the monarchy, they are therefore using their memories of the massacre only to serve such a movement, representing themselves to others permanently desirable in their anti-monarchical identity, and the result is that the survivors do not know that they are dismissed in representing the wider aspect of a massacre, wider than an extra-constitutional involvement, which is *the knowledge that they already know but eventually turns out to be the knowledge they are supposed not to know*, to themselves and to others.

Therefore, contrary to the memory as the individual's selection, this means that survivors in fact always-already possess knowledge of the history of the massacre in a broader perspective, but by continually asserting that they know only the anti-monarchical aspect, this leads to the result that survivors have unconsciously misrecognised the knowledge that they have already known about the massacre, failing to present that thought to themselves and to others. They must consistently keep maintaining themselves as knowing and memorising only the monarchical intervention in the massacre, which prevents the subject realising their own *objet petit a*, something that already exist in them and something that they have already known and remains active in their thought. As a consequence, psychoanalysis suggests a mistake to the Thai survivors including their supporters in at least two instances. In the first instance, survivors are desirable only insofar as they maintain their political objectives of overthrowing the monarchy, which means that if those survivors withdraw their anti-monarchical ideologies, those survivors are no-longer the object cause of desire for their supporters. In the second instance, by repeating the supposed intervention of the royal family to themselves and their supporters, both survivors and their supporters obscure the broader story of the massacre, which is to suggest that their knowledge of massacre is replete with lack, alienation, and misrecognition.

*Death Drive, Sinthome, and jouissance*

Subjectivities exist that transgress social regulation, with such existence overcoming its alienation and obtaining enjoyment unknown to the social norm. The subjectivity produced by a social norm is the subject desired by the Other, notably, the social norm, the regulation, and the law; and such subjectivity makes itself the subject of fantasy, only identifying with the social

norm, presenting itself as a subject that is cooperative with society. The algebra of the subject of fantasy or the subject that makes itself desirable to the Other, cooperating with the desire of the Other, realising the demand of the Other and deciding not to fail the Other, is  $\$ \diamond a$ . To explain, the algebra of  $\$$  is to suggest that the subjectivity that shows itself before the Other is not really the subject as the Real as such. It is simply the subject that corresponds and jointly binds with the demand of the Other. The  $a$  in the algebra describes that subjectivity that corresponds with the Other is reflexive of subject desired by the Other. However, as subjectivity is also constituted with a surplus, the subject's appearance before the Other is the lack of the Other. Because the Other signifies that its position of desire is symptomatic, the subject that coordinates with the Other is not really the subject as the Real as such. In effect, if the subject continues to cooperate with the Other, the subject will be continued itself in self-alienation, and  $\$$  in this algebra is 'the barred subjectivity'. But if, on the contrary, the subject seeks to overcome its self-alienation, anticipating to manifest its authentic-self more than that cooperating with the Other, the result is that the subject strives to push itself beyond the Other's demand in order to become 'the being-without-signifier' which is imperative of something that is unknown and unsignified to the Other.<sup>42</sup> The subject which attempts to split from the Other, becomes the subject that is incomprehensible to the Other. The subject emerges as 'the sinthome', a negation of the equilibrium point between subject and the Other by transforming or becoming another mode of existence unknown to the symbolic order and the Other. Thus, the sinthome is the being-without-signifier, its enjoyment is a surplus and such surplus-enjoyment (the *jouissance*) of the subject turned to sinthome is unknown to the Other.

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<sup>42</sup>Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII*, trans. Dennis Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 263.

Obtaining *jouissance* is seen as a necessary condition to overcome subject's self-alienation in relation to the desire of the Other. The death instinct or the death drive embedded in the sinthome, meaningfully defined as a new category of subject that transgresses a fantasmatic enjoyment given by the Other, is not unrelated to *jouissance*. Sinthome is a subject that is imagined as the form-of-life that dares to know death, the death drive is "the will to destruction, to make a fresh start, and the will for an Other-Thing".<sup>43</sup> It is the will of destruction and the will to embrace death that explains that the death drive is the Thing, which is relative to surplus-enjoyment, and which is unknown to the Other. The will to embrace death marks the meaning of *jouissance* as existence that exceeds the boundary of the Other. *Jouissance* is not as the same as ordinary enjoyment because *jouissance* accepts death as part of enjoyment, in other words, *jouissance* is not known to the ordinary enjoyment and unknown to the Other because it forms itself in a form of the pain in pleasure. The algebra for the death drive in relation to *jouissance* is  $\$ \leftrightarrow D$ , and this highlights the trait of Lacanian sinthome. In this algebra,  $\$$  is not 'the barred subject' but as the sinthome is the Thing unknown to the Other, this goes with the idea that the subjects turned to symptom have the will to embrace *jouissance*, a pain in pleasure, and a death drive.

How do the psychoanalytic concepts of sinthome, death drive and *jouissance* become key to understanding the four scenarios of the politics of survivors? How do those three relative concepts lead to the understanding of the subjectivities of survivors that emerged after the Vietnam War, the Khmer Rouge's killing field, the 1988 August massacre in Myanmar, and the 1976 October crackdown in Thailand? In the chapter 2 of this thesis, the case of Vietnam shows that despite the fact that bloggers and survivors of the Vietnam War, who since the Vietnam War

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<sup>43</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 262.

have opposed the communists, were arrested and sentenced to jail, these bloggers and survivors have not been discouraged by the violence of the government. Through a psychoanalytic analysis of the death drive, it can be said accordingly that those Vietnam War survivors, in the course of their political movement against the communist government, may have the will to face death, their surplus enjoyment (*jouissance*) becomes the Thing, which is unknown and becomes ‘the being without signifier’ for people whose acquisitions of enjoyment are on the basis of ordinary enjoyment such as eating, reading, sightseeing, and so on. The case of Cambodia demonstrates this point in a way that recounting the story of the killing fields for survivors such as Chum Mey is not only a memory recalled in opposition to the government of Hun Sen, but in the activity of retrieving the past can also be seen the survivor’s surplus enjoyment as a way of obtaining pleasure in pain; a *jouissance*, in which survivors are seen as the Lacanian sinthome(s). In chapter 4, the case of Myanmar displays the interrelationship between sinthome(s), death drive, and *jouissance*. Before Myanmar had a civilian government for the first time in 2015, the 88 Generation Students had to face the violence of the military government. Such violence did not discourage that generation of students, comprising survivors from the crackdown at Rangoon University, from campaigning for democracy in Myanmar. The last case study in this thesis is the politics of survivors in Thailand, where *jouissance* is able to shed light on the subjectivity of survivors. The concepts urge us to think that perhaps recalling trauma is not a trigger of trauma in survivors insofar as survivors use memories of the massacre in their political activities to benefit anti-royalist movements; recalling a painful memory becomes paradoxically a pleasure.

In addition, chapter 5 articulates ‘the three towers of the Real’: the first tower is witnessing violence to the bodies of ‘bare lives’, which does not generate trauma in the witnesses; the second tower is the intrusion of the Real culminating in the destabilisation of the

symbolic order; and the third power of the Real is the impossibility of symbolising the Real, which insulates the first and second towers. Winichakul's ambivalent memory is tied to the second tower of the Real because his memory is realised as an endeavour to split and divide the first tower of the Real from the state perspective that violence against protestors is accepted as rational from the second tower of the Real in which the responsibility of the massacre belongs to the monarchy. Judging that Winichakul's testimony is a key to the second tower of the Real based on his insistence on dividing memory for the reflection of the massacre into two characters, his testimony that belongs to the second tower of the Real is imperative within a psychoanalytic theory of *jouissance*. Although the third tower of the Real designates the impossibility of representing trauma linguistically, it is no less to suggest that Winichakul's surplus enjoyment arises out of his testimony that belongs into the second tower of the Real illustrates his daring to face death and the Thai *lèse-majesté*. As a Lacanian *sinthome*, Winichakul's enjoyment in recounting a trauma amid his confrontation with the violence of the Thai state is the pleasure in pain, a *jouissance* that transcends ordinary enjoyment, unravelling a form of enjoyment that is unknown to Thai social norms.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter tries to validate the theory of the politics of survivors by basing analysis on four significant insights: Žižek's 'critique of ideology'; memory theory; Lacanian psychoanalysis; and trauma theory. It does so in the context of case studies from four Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam; Cambodia; Myanmar; and Thailand. In conclusion, survivors play a crucial role in resisting the state's official memory, a site where obscene enjoyment is produced,

thus culminating in the discord and political antagonism which highlight the character of ultrapolitics. Adjacent to this, the thesis theorises that survivors' traumas are 'a collective memory' and 'a site of memory'. Representing trauma in visual mediums shows how memory under state control is deconstructed and reconstructed. This means that the representation of trauma in culture cannot be considered in isolation from the politics of survivors. The thesis also proposes that survivors' memories and their perspectives on the world are influenced by traumatic incidents, but that traumas are something that survivors feel inside their bodies. It is impossible for survivors to rely on language to represent trauma fully. The psychoanalytic reason for this is that trauma is the Real that evades linguistic representation and there must be a trauma that survivors know unconsciously but cannot express. In relation to this, the thesis adds the possibility of thinking about whether survivors are the object cause of desires (*the object petit a*), underscoring that survivors are desired by the Other insofar as survivors agree to cooperate with the demand of their listeners/audiences in compensation of their political movements. As long as survivors are not able to access to their own thoughts about trauma in their entirety, they communicate lack to listeners/audiences. Given this consideration, survivors are symptomatic and their narratives and testimonies of traumas are the object cause of desire that simply replaces the Real image of trauma. Finally, the thesis highlights the relationship between survivors, sinthome, death drive, and *jouissance*. Survivors in their course of political activism against the state are sinthome(s) who embrace *jouissance*, which is a surplus enjoyment, an enjoyment unknown to the Other, and pleasure in pain. Participating in political movements and facing the risk of being killed by violence shows that survivors have death drives in their minds. The concept of *jouissance* explains that recounting trauma need not necessarily be a trigger for depressive thoughts about the desperate moments that survivors have experienced. Survivors

seem to enjoy their own painful memory as long as recounting trauma is a vital part of a political movement. All of these psychoanalytic issues point out that the theoretical and empirical aspects of Lacanian psychoanalysis and the politics of survivors are not isolated from one other.



## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this research project has been to propose a theory of the politics of survivors. I have argued in this thesis that survivors are individuals who are haunted by the past yet play a crucial role in political activism in the present. Their political activism aims to transform existing political regimes they consider authoritarian and responsible for violence, replacing these with more democratic governments. As suggested in the introduction of the thesis, many literatures in social sciences and politics analyse survivors. Instead of acknowledging survivors' significant role in political activism, however, they consider survivors to have psychological disturbance and treat them as people who need medical care. As a consequence, these literatures appear to depoliticise survivors. In addition, there are many literatures that have asked how survivors form collective memories and communities based on their encounters with past violence. However, it is unclear whether these literatures view survivors as individuals or as a group of traumatised people, and equally, whether these survivors are capable of political opposition. At this point, the thesis drew on the third category of literatures, including the work of scholars such as Jenny Edkins, Berber Bevernage, and Griselda Pollock, which essentially empower survivors' voices and emphasise their potential to be political activists. Inspired by those works, the thesis introduced two research questions which guided the investigation. The first question introduced was "how and in what way have survivors participated in political protests in the present?" The second question followed on from this, asking "how and in what way do survivors form their subjectivities in relation to these political protests?" These research questions helped the thesis focus on issues of political

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activism, memory, traumas, and the subjectivity of survivors. In order to answer these questions, the thesis drew on some literatures that have not commonly been used to address these problems, yet provide crucial resources for understanding memory, survivors and activism. To this end, I explored Slavoj Žižek's 'critique of ideology' and 'ultrapolitics', Maurice Halbwachs's 'collective memory' and Pierre Nora's 'site of memory', Cathy Caruth's hypothesis of the inability of language to represent trauma, and Jacques Lacan's theory of subjectivity.

The theory of the politics of survivors developed in this thesis has four main components. The first component is the ambiguity of the communication of trauma given that trauma has 'a Split location'. When survivors communicate trauma to their audiences, it is unclear whether the narratives and stories are derived from survivors' consciousness or their unconsciousness. Significant in this regard is the inability of survivors to elucidate the entirety of trauma, which is not simply about forgetfulness or collective amnesia, but due to the gap between language that communicates trauma and the bodily experience of trauma. The second component highlights the 'use of memory' by survivors in privileged political positions, which this thesis refers to as 'pro-government survivors', and by the 'use of memory' by survivors in political activism, which this thesis refers to as 'pro-democracy survivors'. The truth of the traumatic incident remains obscure so long as testimonies, memories, and narratives are used in different ways by both categories of survivors, which on the one hand produce 'the Ideological-Trauma' or a state's production of trauma with the objective of controlling people, and 'the Real-trauma' or a trauma which challenges the state's narrative on the other. While the second component stresses that antagonism is central to survivors' politics of memory, the third component problematizes survivors' testimonies, memories, and narratives by linking it to Lacan's *object petit a* by arguing that those representations are the lack(s). As *the object petit a*, those representations are

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simply substitutions of the full image of trauma, the Lacanian Real, that audiences can no longer access. In this way, survivors are the objects of their audiences' desire, unless survivors decide to fail their audiences. The fourth component shows how political activist survivors initially transform into the *sinthome* or another mode of existence separated from the desire of the Other, which is symptomatic. Despite the repercussions (such as government repression), survivors are *sinthome(s)* that have death drives and are willing to face violence to attain their political goals. Recalling desperate memories to their audiences lead not simply to the triggering of trauma, but also reflect survivors' *jouissances*, the pleasure that comes with pain, insofar as those memories are considered useful for political activism. All four components are tested throughout the thesis via four case studies in Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand.

## **The Key Findings of Each Chapter**

The first case study was Vietnam, and the conflict of memory among Vietnam War veterans. The Communist Party has constructed an official memory that celebrates victory over imperialist foreign powers. Vietnam War survivors living overseas oppose the official memory, arguing that the Communist Party covers up the existence of the re-education camp, a camp that the current government claims was used to educate people, but survivors claim was really a concentration camp. Survivors recall memories of their experience in the concentration camps, nominally a painful act, but, whether they know it consciously or not, their acts are filled with pleasure – a pain in pleasure or *jouissance*. They endeavour to remind others of the collective trauma of the concentration camp, although the ways they communicate memories are

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sometimes indirect, such as in visual works. However, those images can be taken as images that stand-in for the horror of the traumatic incident.

The conflict between survivors in governmental positions and those opposed to the government prevailed in the case of Cambodia. While the government refuses to tell the truth about the Khmer Rouge, survivors of their brutality warn the public that some of those responsible for the violence are currently members of the cabinet. Fearing governmental repercussion, survivors decide to work in civil society and confess that memory of the Khmer Rouge's atrocities motivates them to participate in the long, painstaking task of rebuilding the country from scratch. Local and international courts cooperated to establish an international hybrid court to prosecute the aggressors, and the court has invited Cambodian survivors to give testimony. Although testimonies have led to the conviction of aggressors – as if to say that survivors are satisfied with justice granting to them – survivors' testimonies serve as the Lacanian object of fantasy (*the object petit a*) that denies audiences access to the pictorial truth of the traumatic incident, the Real, which once being disclosed may result in the rethinking of the justice granted by the court.

The scenario of Myanmar highlights- in the same way as Vietnam and Cambodia- the uncompromising stance between survivors in the service of authority and those in opposition to it. Survivors of the August 8<sup>th</sup> 1988 have created a network at home and overseas by linking Burmese across the globe to remember this collective trauma. Using cyberspace to coordinate their activities, they use testimonies and memories to declare that some members of the junta government are responsible for the massacre. As long as some Burmese survivors use testimonies and memories in service of their political projects, this creates an anxiety not only about whether those survivors are reliable politicians, but also about their reliability as narrators

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of the incident they give testimony about. It is possible that survivors see their testimonies and memories mobilise others towards the political objective that they want in the first place, and, in consequence their followers are those who have faith in them. Given this consideration, the significant points are not only that survivors use testimonies and memories to mobilise others politically, but survivors guarantee themselves as the object cause of desire to their followers by repeating to them the same stories. If survivors begin to speak their stories in different ways from which their supporters want them to speak, this will be harmful to their political movements because their supporters may decide to withdraw their support.

Thailand is the final case study where the conflict of memory over violence is entrenched. It is compatible with other case studies in terms of the official memory and the opposition to it through survivors' political mobilisations. Survivors who have subsequently become scholars give differing accounts of the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 massacre; some urge others to forget while others believe that the massacre is an unforgettable memory. However, an option of remembering and forgetting is less important if compared with the use of memory. The Thai case study shows that remembering memory reflects the political use of memory, deviating from the question whether to remember or to forget. Recalling a traumatic incident in order to hold perpetrators to account often involves using the massacre to undermine the monarchy. Thus, the testimonies and memories of survivors cannot be taken as the truth of the incident because it is not independent from political considerations. While representations of trauma are problematic with regards to the truth of the incident, it is suggested that the recovery of the painful memory reflects survivors' *jouissances*, that is to say, bringing back the painful memory in supreme enjoyment of using it to overthrow the monarchy. In this regards, survivors also present themselves to their supporters as the object causes of desire (*the object petit a*), which means that

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survivors must continue to maintain the same testimonies of the massacre to secure their current positions. It will be disappointing to their political supporters, if survivors begin to tell another story. Ultimately, this shows that survivors' stories simply stand as substitution for the inaccessibility of the truth of the incident; those stories are only the remnant images of trauma that listeners/audiences can hold onto. Despite Thailand being known for the toughest *lese-majeste* in the world, through their willingness to face death, survivors of the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 are transformed into a Lacanian sinthome, moving forward politically while embracing the risk of being harmfully affected by government violence. All of these case studies analysed in the thesis mark and highlight the contribution of the thesis described below.

## **The Contribution of the Thesis**

This thesis contributes empirically and theoretically to three branches of knowledge, namely, the studies of survivors and political engagement, Southeast Asian history, and International Politics. First, the thesis emphasises the significance of viewing survivors as traumatised individuals who engage in political opposition to governments while other literatures downplay such critical political activities. The thesis suggests that academic inquiries concerned with survivors should take into account the way that survivors- as individuals and as groups- play a role in political resistance. Building on this, the thesis offers a theory of the politics of survivors, given the absence of such a theory within existing literatures that deal with survivors. Second, it can be said that many literatures which addresses Southeast Asian histories, politics, and cultures are not much interested in issues of memory, trauma, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Žižekian politics in contrast to powers, dominations, laws, violence, and democratisation, all of

which receive much closer attention. My research suggests that memory and trauma issues- including the critical perspectives of Lacan and Žižek- can shed light on the issues addressed by Southeast Asian historians. Memory and trauma are psychological factors that help us to understand, for instance, democratisation and political protests in Southeast Asian countries (not only in Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand, but also in neighbouring countries where there has been violence, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste). Third, the thesis contributes to the discipline of International Politics by encouraging International Politics scholars to take an interest in the way that survivors' political activism is interlaced with memory, trauma, and subjectivity; not only in Southeast Asian countries, but also in other countries across the world. Despite notable exceptions, the wider discipline of International Politics gives little concern to memory, trauma, and the subjectivity of traumatised persons compared to concern with the role of the state, foreign policy, international organisation, international law, and globalisation. The thesis contributes to attempts within the discipline to deal with those issues and the research conducted here contributes to these debates emerging in the field. What exactly this thesis contributes to these debates will be easier to ascertain if we outline its limitations as well.

### **Further Research**

Judith Butler was invited to deliver a keynote address at the 'Borders and the Politics of Mourning' seminar held at the New School in New York on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016.<sup>1</sup> The title that Butler gave was 'Grievability and Resistance' based on her concern for justice for life that is left to die. In world politics too many lives- e.g. refugees seeking sanctuary in Europe- are

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<sup>1</sup> *Borders and the Politics of Mourning – Keynote Address by Judith Butler*, in YouTube video, 1:13:06, posted by Zeyno Ustun, October 29, 2016, accessed December 1, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32oNrfqE8EY>.

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abandoned, and Butler assumes that subjects who are sensitive to such losses are ‘subjects capable of grieving’. Butler asks a series of crucial questions in response to this: ‘Who is abandoned or left to die?’; ‘Who is considering living while considering death?’; and ‘Who are living in the zone of social death while remaining un-death?’ The idea that subjects must be capable of grieving strangers and others unknown to them reflects the idea that ethics should extend beyond borders. Borders are fixed and in relation to mourning, they regulate and ritualise mourning. Borders are set in contrast to subjects’ sentiments, which often show sensitivity and mourning, unfixed by borders. This explains why grievability is ethically globalised and unbound by the fixation of borders. Butler argues that grievability is a resistance to the sovereign state that tends to remain detached from traumatised lives and makes a decision that there are lives that are supposed to die. To achieve equality, subjects need to resist sovereign power’s abandonment of grief on the one hand, and to see subjects not as ‘bare lives’ but as lives worth grieving on the other. This is what Butler calls ‘the distribution of the grievability of life’ in which all lives on earth should be equally respected. If all losses are respected, there will be no loss of life- either human or non-human- that does not receive recognition.

Why is Butler’s keynote address significant as criticism of the thesis? While the thesis focused on survivors and the use of memory in order to overthrow the current government, Butler’s argument demands we rethink whether survivors only mourn and grieve the losses of their comrades and ignore the traumas of others, both within a polity and beyond its borders. Butler’s argument demands that we understand whether survivors do not grieve for others outside their nation, and whether their mourning and collective melancholia stem not only from the past but also from the polity they inhabit. On 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016, when Thai survivors were obsessed with mourning their dead comrades and anxious that the ceremony would be cancelled



by the junta, it seemed that Butler was warning them in her keynote address that their activities were obsessions that arose from their position in the world. In addition, Butler's viewpoint poses criticism of the way that the thesis has dealt with questions of sovereignty. It must be asked that when survivors opposed to governments become appointed to government positions, what happens to the lives of minorities that survivors usually ignore by mourning only dead relatives, comrades, and friends? It will be noted as a limitation to the act of grievability by survivors, abandoning Butler's utopia of 'the distribution of the grievability of life', if survivors turned into the governmental positions reproduce the ignorance of the collective trauma of others such as minorities and displaced people such as the Rohingya in Myanmar.

Besides Butler, Jenny Edkins was also invited to share the main idea of her recent article due to be published in 2017. Edkins' analysis explores the relationship between politics, naming, and the irreplaceability to name.<sup>2</sup> Her analysis stresses the importance of acknowledging those who died, but other names can replace those losses, so that replaceable names are counted as equivalent to those who died. Edkins pushes analysis further, however, by stressing that there are persons, whose names cannot be replaced by others, highlighting that victims cannot be replaced by other names. Her analysis demands that the thesis asks whether the names of survivors ranging from Vietnam to Thailand are the names of 'the irreplaceable'. In the future, when survivors die, it is significant to ask whether their names are losses altogether, no longer in memories, because they are irreplaceable. It is also significant to ask whether survivors' names are equivalent to what Edkins calls 'names without body', the names that only mean to us in memories but whose bodies no longer exist in this world. The thesis acknowledges the names of

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<sup>2</sup> *Borders and the Politics of Mourning Social Research: An International Quarterly (Summer 2016)*, in YouTube video, 1:20:04, posted by Zeyno Ustun, October 31, 2016, accessed December 1, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8FDma0fDT8>.

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survivors in opposition to governments. However, it is an inevitable fact that survivors will leave only names to the generation of political activists who come after, when their flesh and blood no longer exist in this world. When that time comes, the question inspired by Edkins is whether there are any persons who can replace the following names of survivors: Do Hoang Diem; Chum Mey; Min Co Naing; and Thongchai Winichakul? Suppose that those names of survivors are replaceable, we should ask how and in what way are they replaceable and by whom? Can those names be used politically and by whom? If the names of survivors are irreplaceable, but the ideology of them persists in the future, does this compel us to think rather about ‘the spirit’ or ‘the phantom’ of the politics of survivors while the bodies of survivors are no longer with us in this world? These questions direct the thesis towards future research.

Edkins’s analysis of ‘the irreplaceable names’ gives direction to future research into trauma, memory, and survivors. The issues she raises: names; substitutions; and their irreplaceability are beyond the scope of the thesis but these issues can be explored in future research. I acknowledge the points raised by Edkins as potential criticisms of this thesis as initial points for the improvement of my theory of the politics of survivors in the future. Future research might interrogate whether the names of survivors are irreplaceable names, and whether this suggests that the names of survivors are equivalent to the Name-of-the-Father, a name that castrates others who desire to share the same place? For instance, recall the death of Fidel Castro, the name of the irreplaceable in Edkins’s rhetoric, there are no other revolutionary names which can replace the name Castro as a revolutionary pragmatist in Cuba. Any names that attempt to usurp the place of Castro are unfortunately castrated and cannot achieve the nominal status of Castro. Does this mean that the loss of somebody and memory about somebody who died are also irreplaceable if their names are irreplaceable in the first place? Applying this

thought to future research into survivors, the question is whether there are any names that try to substitute the names of survivors in which names that come after may not be able to substitute survivors but only serve as the ‘remind-ability’ of names that no longer exist. This point shapes and reshapes the possibility of taking the theory of the politics of survivors in another direction.

One possibility that arises from this consideration is that Edkins’s assumption of the name of the irreplaceable can be theoretically understood as *the object petit a* in Lacanian psychoanalysis. In the thesis, I discuss throughout that the testimonies, narratives, and memories of survivors are remarkable as the substitutions of the Real images of traumas. In this thesis, *the object petit a* is the representation that serves as the object cause of desire as a replacement image for the image that is inaccessible. But, as argued earlier, Edkins’s underlying assumption of irreplaceability compels the thesis to ask whether the names of the survivors are irreplaceable. I read this point in a Lacanian fashion, which suggests that the irreplaceable is the Real while the replaceable names are significations or symbolisations of imaginaries that no longer exist. As a result, names that come after are symbolic names that remind us of the names of survivors who are lost and gone forever (the Real). In this sense, I argue that we are facing the junction, not only between the replaceable and the irreplaceability (the Real), but also between the irreplaceability and what we may call ‘the remind-ability’, the names that are rendered in the symbolic order in the post-mortem in that they are only important to remind us of the loss of something irreplaceable yet cannot entirely substitute for it. I add to Edkins that remind-ability is *the object petit a*, the subjects or the images of something that cannot exactly replace the loss but simply serves as the reminder of those losses. To follow Judith Butler, there is no doubt that the political subjects are not only the subjects who are capable of mourning, but also to follow Edkins, we may say that the political subjectivities of the names that come after survivors are

## *Conclusion*

subjects that are capable of being the remind-ability, the reminders of the phantoms and spirits of predecessors who one day will be lost forever.

This discussion suggests that the thesis might attempt to revise and improve its theory of the politics of survivors especially given that survivors will all die one day in the future. When that time arrives in the future, it forces the researcher to revise what we think in this time and space. The theory of the politics of survivors needs to change its identity: it is both transformative and modifiable. It must be revisited and resonate with the changing conditions that surround it. It must note the gap that it can indicate and illuminate that gap in order to fulfil it. It must be revised in order to reflect the changing character of the politics of survivors, and to do so, we can draw and redraw on theories other than those of Lacan and Žižek in order to develop the theory further. The theory is arguably repetition with difference which means that the theory we discuss at length in this time and space can be replaced, changed, and modified in the future. In short, while the names of the survivors are irreplaceable, the theory of the politics of survivors is always-already the replaceable.

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